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# YOUTH AND THE BIBLE

BY

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1938

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TO  
A FATHER AND MOTHER  
WHOSE FAITH IS ALWAYS SURE  
AND ALWAYS GROWING



## PREFACE

MORE than a dozen years of teaching Biblical History and several years of teaching Religious Education in Wellesley College have convinced me of three things: (1) the welcome most young people give to the modern historical view of the Bible which makes it an intelligible, useful and readable book to them, (2) the harm that results from the fact that so large a majority of our children are growing up with a view of the Bible which makes a vital religion in this twentieth century difficult for them to attain, (3) the confusion that exists in the minds of many college graduates and other informed and intelligent ministers, teachers, and parents concerning ways and means of adapting and incorporating the results of historical study of the Bible in work with children and young people.

Strange to say, neither the importance nor the method of making such adaptation has been dealt with in any literature in the United States except in the most fragmentary and casual fashion. More has been written in England, but even there only special aspects of the problem have been considered. Rather than wait longer for a book on the subject to appear, I have attempted one myself. It is written at a time of sharp controversy in the religious world, when accusations, protests, defenses and explanations fill even the pages of the daily newspapers, but it is not written in a controversial spirit. It is hoped that it may in part meet the needs of two groups: those

who want suggestions that may aid them in teaching the Bible from the modern point of view to their children or their pupils and those still somewhat uncertain of their own theories, who wish more light on what is involved in the liberal position and the results for faith if children are taught from the liberal or from the conservative point of view. The first two chapters are written with this second group in mind. Those who are thoroughly familiar with the modern point of view in religion and who are convinced that our teaching of children should rest frankly on this basis, would do well to begin with Chapter III, where the problem of adaptation for children is dealt with directly.

There is no attempt here at a thorough statement of the methods or results of historical Bible study and no explanation or defense of them except incidentally as part of the problem of adaptation. A list of some of the many books that deal with those subjects far more adequately than would be possible here is given in the Appendix. Furthermore there is no attempt to adapt the Biblical material to each age or even to each department in the Church school. Children differ so much, owing to native ability, home influences and school training, that only the teacher or parent who knows his own little group can tell whether or not they are ready for a certain kind of presentation or discussion. Consequently there will seldom be an attempt at more than the roughest classification into three general groups of young children (under eight or nine years), older children (from eight or nine to twelve or fourteen), and young people. Ways of dealing with the subject-matter will be suggested for these groups only.

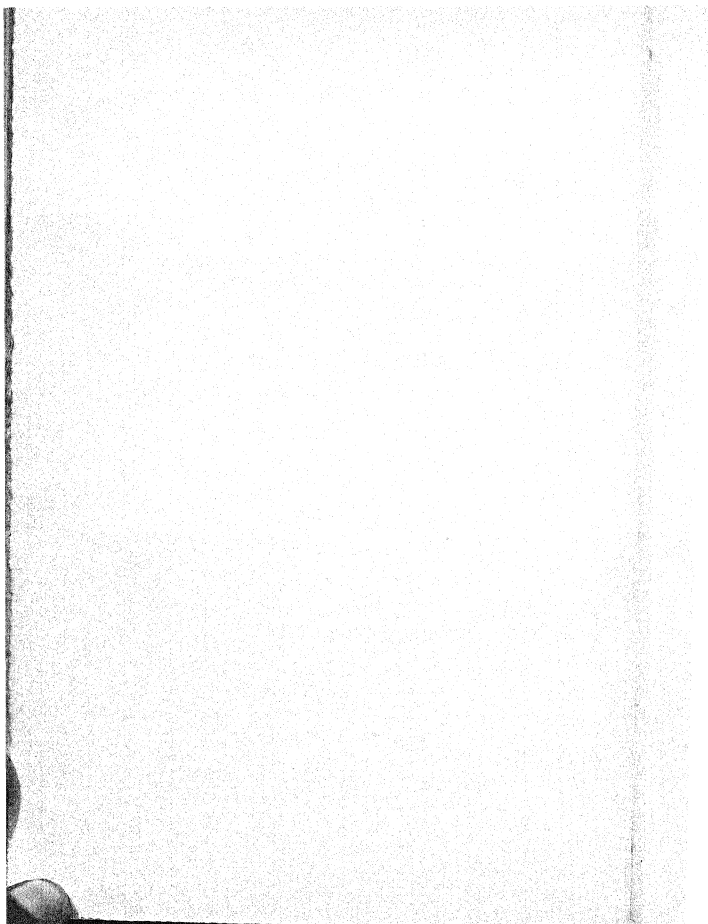
I have quoted quite freely from books and magazine articles that bear on the subject, with the object in mind of making the book represent a variety of experience and

of gathering together some scattered suggestions on the subject that have appeared from time to time in different books and periodicals, some of which might be difficult of access to the average teacher, particularly those published in England, which are all too little read in America.

I wish to thank those who have supplemented my own experience with the results of their years of teaching in the Church schools and the many students of Wellesley College who have shared with me their enthusiasms and their perplexities. Without these helpers the book would not have been possible.

MURIEL ANNE STREIBERT.

*Wellesley College,  
June 1, 1924*



## INTRODUCTION

How shall religious education deal with the changed views of the Bible that result from modern scholarship? In particular, how shall we keep faith with childhood, which necessarily relies upon the judgment of teachers?

The adult who desires to know the Scriptures from the modern point of view finds a considerable number of popular expositions written to meet his particular need. But amazingly little has been printed that squarely meets the whole issue as it affects the teaching of children.

Shall we let children know what scholars really think about the Bible and its various parts? Shall we disclose the bearing of scholarship upon the religious conflicts that are raging? How shall we handle the miracle-stories, particularly stories of the birth and of the resurrection of Jesus? What shall we do about contrasting levels in the apprehension of God as they appear in the centuries-long history of Israel? What sort of authority shall we expect the Bible to have for the young? How can we smooth the change from the old to the new without compromising the truth?

Above all, how can the deeper things in the religious experiences recorded in the Bible be made to speak in the same thought-forms and in the same language as the young of today use in their schools and in their daily experience?

What happens when these questions are ignored? The assumption appears to prevail that the Christian *religion*



can be taught from the scriptural records without taking a definite position upon the nature of the records themselves. But this view finds little support either in reason or in acquaintance with young people who in childhood were handled in this manner in the Church school (see Chapters I and II). Nor is it to be supposed that schools of any sort can indefinitely ignore the verdicts of scholarship concerning the subject-matter that is regularly employed.

Professor Streibert brings to the discussion of these questions expert knowledge of the Bible; acquaintance with religious education in theory and in practice; insight, gathered from intimate contact with college students, into the deplorable conditions that now exist, and experience in helping to change these conditions. She has, too, another, and indispensable, qualification for her chosen task, namely, warm love for the Bible. No one will find here the cold intellectualism that many suppose to be the inevitable result of critical views; her attitude, rather, is that of one who has found a spiritual treasure that he longs to impart to the young. No one could be more considerate of real difficulties; no one could more consistently keep religious values in the foreground. If some should think her too considerate, too ready to temper the wind of historic truth, a larger number, particularly teachers of young children, will find here just the help that they will feel they are able to use.

GEORGE A. COE,

*Teachers College,  
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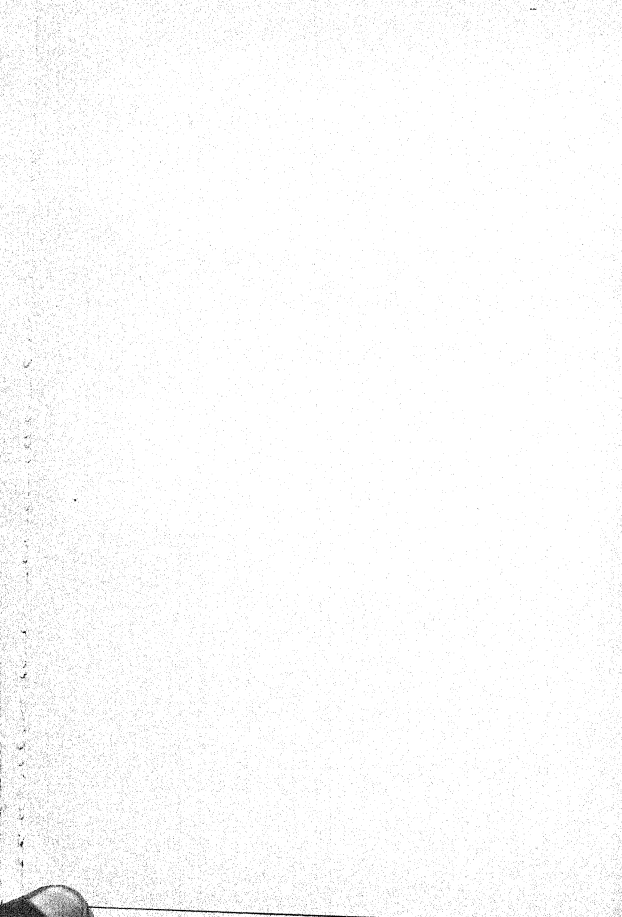
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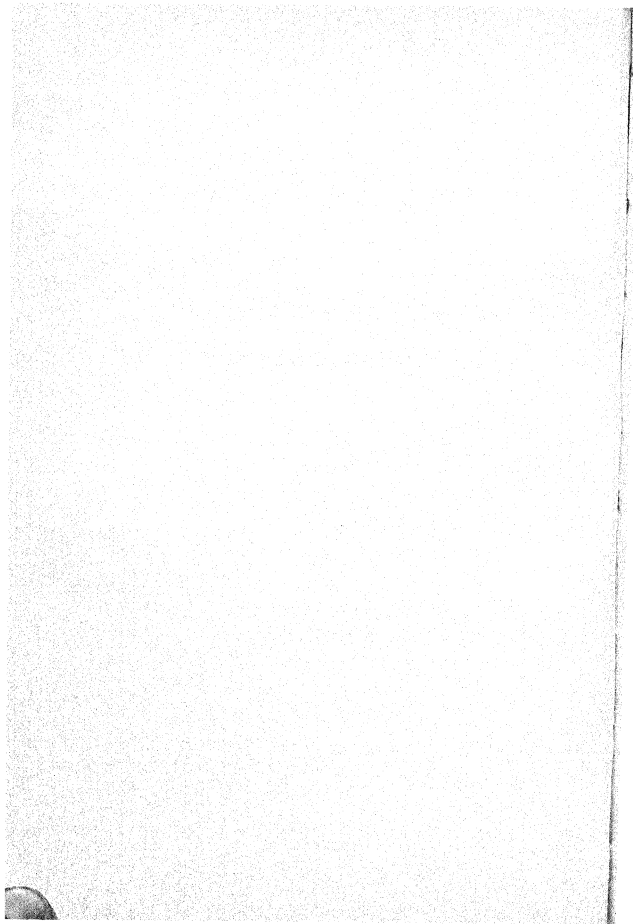
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**YOUTH AND THE BIBLE**



# YOUTH AND THE BIBLE

## CHAPTER I

### ARE WE GIVING OUR BEST TO OUR CHILDREN?

A young teacher was telling a Sunday School class the story of the Garden of Eden in as graphic a manner as possible, when she was taken by surprise by a child's direct question, "Is that all true?" For herself she did not think it was, as history, so she could not say yes, but to say no would be such an anticlimax that it would bring her story toppling down to the ground for the whole class. She had not previously thought out explanations that she could give to children, so she took refuge in saying in a shocked tone of voice, "Why, what do you *suppose*?" and continued her story. The child was silenced and the teacher went home humiliated and remorseful over her evasion. Had she but realized it, she represented a large group of teachers and parents who hold what has come to be known as the modern position in their own attitude to the Bible, but whose teaching of children is based on a point of view no longer tenable to themselves.

Just what is meant by the "modern position" and why, if it controls a person's own thinking, does it not also control his presentation of the truth to children? The "modern" or "liberal" or "progressive" position indicates no special theology or denomination. It is familiar to all Christians who study with care the Master's own use of the Scriptures. He recognized that there had been



growth in men's conceptions of right. He said that some things had been written for their "hardness of heart" in the past, but that he expected them to live according to higher standards now. He discarded whole chapters of commands about clean and unclean animals because his own insight and common sense showed him that "there is nothing without the man that going into him can defile him." No words could more plainly show that he thought some parts even of the sacred written law to be mistaken than his "Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil." To be sure, he found some expressions of truth there so noble in spirit that he gave them his unqualified approval and he learned them by heart, loved them and lived by them. His conception seems to have been that the sacred Scriptures which men of his time were treating as in every word the inerrant truth of God were in reality a collection of writings of different values, to be studied with a discriminating mind and a conscience alert to test their worth.

Apparently he expected that his followers would adopt the same attitude towards the Scriptures, for he did not feel that it was his responsibility to pass a final authoritative judgment on all that had come down from the past, but by his method of dealing with special passages, showed men the method he expected them to follow. Both Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel showed a large measure of understanding of this point of view in treating Scripture; both were splendidly free to select and adapt, to leave behind what others had thought essential and to advance, guided by the spirit of truth, into regions of religious thinking previously untrodden.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An excellent presentation of this fact may be found in E. F. Scott's *The New Testament Today*.

But as time went on this principle of liberty was forgotten. The church asserted its authority to determine what was true and asked the individual only to accept and obey. Every one knows that the leaders of the Protestant Reformation refused to bow to this external authority and Protestants are proud of their heritage of spiritual liberty, but not every one sees clearly that the Protestant leaders were not entirely consistent. They had grown so used to living under an external authority that they did not quite know how to get on without one. They did not dare trust the spirit of man to use its emancipation wisely, and before long they had set up another external authority—not the church this time but a Book, the infallible Bible. Revelation was thought of as something finished in the past, and men were brought under a greater bondage than the church had ever previously known, to the literal acceptance of every syllable of the Scriptures.

Fortunately in the last century, because of the growth of knowledge along many lines and the development of the historical method of studying the Bible, these shackles have been cast off. Through a method of work which had not developed in the time of Christ, the spirit of Christ in dealing with Scripture has again found expression and men are understanding afresh the meaning of the saying, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

We are free to recognize some parts of the Bible as far from our ideal, while we find other parts to contain the bread of life; free to find God's truth in legend, poetry and folktale, as well as in history; free to bring the earnest scrutiny of our minds as well as the worship of our hearts to these records of the search of God for men and the search of earnest, groping, growing men for God. Such a conception of the Bible makes its every word of interest,

makes it all usable and inspiring in a very real sense. We could not think of God as highly as we do if we had to believe that he was ever all that the Old Testament writers thought him to be, nor could we think of man as highly as we do if we had to believe that God could not trust him to find religious truths through the use of his growing faculties, but had to give him a "final" revelation in the days when the world was young.

Equally thankful we are for the realization that truth is a unity and that "loving the Lord our God with all our minds" means that our minds may contribute to our thought of God through advances which they may make in any direction, that religion has everything to gain and nothing to lose from any new understanding of the world we live in, of our bodies or our minds, of past history or other religions. The dangers that once seemed to threaten religion from science or philosophy are now seen to have been false alarms and we can go ahead with confidence to study any aspect of truth, sure that the God of truth welcomes our advance. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." It is making us free, free from any inhibiting fears that something may be learned tomorrow in study or laboratory which may shake the foundations of religion, free to follow where facts lead.

Why, then, if we are convinced that this point of view is the best our age has to offer, if to live in the older religious thought-world would make religion well-nigh impossible for us, do we not make a serious effort to give this rich heritage to our children and young people? Why are so many of our children growing up with antiquated religious ideas? Why do so few ministers, teachers and parents give time and attention to this problem? Probably for three reasons, chiefly:

(1) Lack of realization of the importance of the prob-

lem, a sense that it does not matter very much how a child thinks about the Bible if he knows the stories. He is only a child anyway and will do his real thinking after he grows up. Other problems, problems of securing a large attendance in the Church School, of organization and of administration, of building and of equipment, and of financial support loom larger and are dealt with first.

(2) Fear of stirring up trouble among the older members of the congregation, of being thought too radical by the conservatives, or of losing the financial support of men and women of the old school.

(3) Lack of knowledge. This may be lack of understanding of what the modern point of view really is. Rumors of the destructive effect of higher criticism have reached the ears of many, but facts about it have come to them only in a fragmentary and prejudiced form, so that their natural desire is to shield the child from what would be entirely welcome if it were properly understood. Others suffer from lack of knowledge of what scholars of today do actually think about this or that part of the Bible, even though they are in sympathy with that general point of view. They have little time for study, books are not available, and the result is that the stories are told as they stand with no explanation.

Still another group of those both sympathetic and informed do not know how to adapt and incorporate the results of modern scholarly study of the Bible in work with children and young people. Will not this point of view, they ask, which is so satisfying to the adult mind be too strong meat for babes? Is not the real explanation beyond children's comprehension? Would they not just get the idea that the Bible "is not true," with resulting religious loss? Many college students will not consider teaching in the Church School for that very reason.

To teach as they were taught would be impossible. The worth of the Bible has been enhanced for them by scholarly study, they are convinced of the validity of these methods, but how to adapt what they know to immature minds or to older ones with little time and few books for study is too much of a problem. The only way out, in their judgment, is not to attempt it at all. A great deal of intelligent leadership is thus lost to the Church.

The teacher perplexed by this problem of adaptation will find very little help. The teacher-training courses hardly touch the subject and the denominational periodicals and religious education magazines seldom mention it. The "Teacher's Helps" furnished with the lesson material are generally very conservative. For example, in one of our best Sunday School Series there is a lesson on "The Bible the revelation of God." The teacher's aim is "To fix in the minds of pupils the great Protestant principle that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice." The teacher is to impress on the boys and girls that "The Bible is to the Christian what the United States Government Infantry Drill Regulations is to the soldier." There is not one word of explanation of the progress in men's thought of God which is revealed in the Bible or anything remotely suggesting the newer theories.

Occasionally some up-to-date explanations of Biblical material are given in condensed form in the teacher's books but the same facts are not repeated in the pupils' books. There one sees few signs of a willingness that the child should know any of the results of the progress that has been made in Biblical study. Furthermore no suggestions are given the teacher as to what he is to do with the few facts of the new order that are presented to him. Is he to reveal these things to his pupils or

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"keep them dark"? The authors of the lessons do not seem to know. Different Sunday School series vary decidedly on these points, but the impression left uppermost from a perusal of them is that the authors and editors feel it best just now to be noncommittal. With rare exceptions whatever suggests the modern point of view is given hesitatingly and timidly and is not carried out consistently.

For example, in a much used and supposedly up-to-date series we find in the foreword to the teacher of fifteen-year old pupils who are to study the life of Christ, "There is at this age a rapid development of intellectual powers. The youth finds himself able to reason. He seeks life's rational basis. His feelings of self-assertion come to the front and he is critical and claims independence of opinion and belief." But there is no word as to how to teach the life of Christ under those conditions. Is the teacher to discuss with the pupil the reliability of the records, is he to compare the two or more accounts of the same event as given in the gospels, is he to consider possible ways of accounting for the miracle stories? Apparently not, for in the books recommended for the teacher's own use there is not one in which a trained mind of the last generation expresses itself. Conservative devotional studies they are, excellent for the adoring heart but what about this youth who "seeks life's rational basis"? There is no provision here for him.

Unfortunately most children are given little aid at home in understanding the Bible. Even in families where the practice is still kept up of telling or reading Bible stories, there is very little attempt to guide the child's thinking. Many Sunday School teachers, questioned as to whether the parents ever object to the kind of teaching given to their children, say that the saddest part of it

is that even the informed and liberal parents do not seem to know or care what the children are taught, but consider that they have discharged their full responsibility when they send their children to Sunday School. An interesting confirmation of this situation was given when a college student wrote to her father, a professor in a Theological Seminary, stating that she and some of her friends were troubled by the ideas they were hearing in their Bible study. He wrote asking her just what she was being taught and on receiving her response, wrote again in surprise and contrition saying, "What have I been doing all these years? What kind of a world have you been living in? Of course all these things are so and I supposed that you knew them." Even when children are communicative and chatter at home about the axe head floating or the fire that didn't burn Daniel's friends, fathers and mothers may smile at the child's tales but they do not try to guide his thinking.

There are parents, of course, who are troubled by the fact that they do not know how to answer their children's questions about the Bible and who want their boys and girls in their earliest years to gain a good start in the right understanding of the Book of books. When such parents turn for aid to the Bible stories written for children they have to search a long time to find anything that meets their needs in any measure. Perhaps the ideal book of Bible stories has yet to be written. Looking over existing ones by dozens is a discouraging task. For the younger children in particular there is little that is really satisfactory.<sup>2</sup>

There is no desire in all that has been said to paint as dark a picture as may be, but merely to register the con-

<sup>2</sup>Some of the better books for different ages are listed in the appendix.

viction that many, probably most children are not receiving any carefully planned or up-to-date training in thinking about the Bible or about religion, and this at a time when we are more and more convinced that a child *can* think, not merely memorize and that education means not learning facts alone, but how to handle facts, how to judge and discriminate; when our efforts are not to cram the child's mind but to awaken and develop his powers.<sup>3</sup>

Is it worth while for a teacher to make the effort to become familiar with what the best minds of today are thinking about the Bible? Should he make that part of his responsibility and duty to his class when he agrees to undertake the work of a teacher? Is it a good investment for a church to spend money in getting a well-chosen library of up-to-date books on religion and the Bible for its parents, teachers and young people? Is it justifiable to have the subject discussed at midweek meetings or in parent-teacher gatherings? Or for the minister or parent to make any inquiries as to the conception of the Bible held by those who are acting as the teachers of their children? We can judge only when we examine the results in the lives of children who have not received any guidance from those who are living intellectually in the twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> "The little child, if he is ever to learn to think, should think as he goes along."—*James Ward*.



## CHAPTER II

### WASTE AND LOSSES

A GREAT deal of blame for young people's loss of faith has been laid on the colleges. Many feel that the colleges undo much of the good work of the church and home. As they see it, the young person is delivered to the college secure in a faith which would last his whole life through if only that agnostic philosophy which he first learns there did not make him question the existence of God and that atheistic psychology make him doubt if he has a soul and the materialistic sciences make him think we have "bowed God out of the universe with thanks for his kind but provisional services." If he studies the Bible his condition is worse yet, for he comes to believe it is a man-made product and the result is a godless young creature proof against any spiritual appeal.

No doubt there is something to be said for this indictment. If we contend that the church has been too careful in keeping the modern knowledge of the Bible out of its Sunday School room we must grant too that the college has not been careful enough to make the required allowances. It is probably true also, that the departmental system of college instruction has overdone the cutting up and parceling out of human knowledge. The different teachers are so careful not to encroach on one another's fields that often the relating of knowledge is left to the student himself and the explanation that would

give him a different point of view and bring religion into living contact with his science or philosophy is not proffered.

But many of those who never go near college walls find plenty to make an unquestioning acceptance of the Bible impossible to them. The methods of study in use in the public schools arouse and develop a willingness to "prove all things," without which one cannot "hold fast to that which is good." The spirit of challenge and inquiry is in the very air the child breathes. He acquires facts also, long before he gets into college, that do not tally with the traditional view of the Bible and any alert child can see that they do not. Miss Hetty Lee quotes a child as remarking scornfully, "The world made in six days! Why my *other* teacher says it took thousands and thousands of years." Perhaps the "other" teacher takes the class to the natural history museum and there, represented in life-like figures which impress themselves indelibly on the child's memory, he sees the different stages in the development of a horse, with charts and dates that do not correspond at all with the creation of all the beasts of the earth on the fifth day. The boy may read Van Loon's "History of Mankind," or pick up Wells' "Outline of History," or Thomson's "Outline of Science" and learn something of what men of science are thinking about the origins and processes of life. Even the newspapers are full of discussions of these matters.

Many parents and Sunday school teachers suppose that the children in their charge are not puzzled over the relation between what they hear and the contents of the Bible stories because they ask no questions. That must not be taken to indicate, however, that no discrepancies are being seen and no doubts harbored. His pupils' seemingly docile acceptance of what he tells them and their

repetition of his phrases after him may lead a teacher to think that theirs is an unclouded childlike faith which he had better not disturb by suggesting that there are any who question these things or that good Christians hold different opinions about them. But a little probing may reveal quite a different state of affairs. A friend reports that after teaching to a class of twelve-year old boys the story of the flames from heaven devouring Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel, he wondered what those boys who had not given the slightest indication of any surprise or suspicion really thought of it. So in an offhand, confidential manner he said as man to man, "Boys, what do you think of that story?" "Nuthin' in it," was the positive and unanimous response. At times not all in the class may be making the same negative reaction, but if there is only one who does it is worth taking into account. Scores of college students brought up in conservative families and churches have told me, "I always knew those miracle stories could not be so" or "I never did believe that the flood and that sort of thing really happened." When asked whether they questioned the teacher about these things, they say, "No, there was no use, such questions wouldn't have been answered" or "We were told we shouldn't question" or "I did ask but got no satisfaction."

What are the results of this lack of harmony between Bible knowledge as commonly taught and knowledge gained through other studies? They are varied, as one would expect.

(1) Some men and women give up religious faith entirely because reason supports what is made to seem to them to be antagonistic to religion and they decide that they can no longer hold to what they now classify as untrue. This seeming disparity between reason and religion

accounts in large part for the fact that so many of our brainiest men are not religious, for it is precisely to the brainy that religion as it is taught comes to seem intellectually impossible. As one reads the statements of disbelief in God which Professor Leuba collected from so many University teachers and published in his book, "The Belief in God and Immortality," one cannot but wonder how differently they would read if those men in their plastic early years and in their receptive adolescent years, had had access to a religion, rational, progressive, free. The churches which blame the colleges for having irreligious teachers on their faculties, must learn to realize that in part they are to blame for giving a kind of preliminary training that results in this agnosticism when a hide-bound conservative religion clashes with the truth as learned in laboratory or lecture-room.

(2) Some young people do win their way through to a religion which is entirely hospitable to all truth. Often, as would be expected, it is the study of the Bible from the historical point of view which enables them to keep the essentials of the "faith of their fathers." The process sometimes includes a difficult period of adjustment when faith seems to have disappeared entirely. Or again the newer conceptions are eagerly welcomed and found satisfying as soon as understood by those who have "always wondered if there wasn't some sensible way of being religious." The following statements from students who have taken college Bible courses will illustrate these reactions:

"I never thought much about the Bible before except as something very difficult to understand, very sacred and very, very tiresome. During this year I have changed my opinion. To me religion would not be worth having unless it could be tested by every known test and found

true. For this reason if it could not be analyzed and still found worthy, the Bible would be worth nothing. The glimpse I have had into its truths has fascinated me and I feel I shall never be content until I learn all I can about it."

"My scepticism in the fall—when I think back and consider my attitude to the Bible and religion—was such that—well, I cannot bear to think of it. It shocks me now. To think that I ever dared to turn my back on it all is hard to believe—but I did. This year of study has done more to settle my views, to help me decide what I believe than anything else could have done. The Bible is far more valuable—I can understand it better."

"I have developed a new religious sense in this course. Old Testament study has been a revelation to me. I can frankly and sincerely say that I have developed more of religion within me in these last nine months than I ever had in the years of my life before."

"I had not thought much about the Bible before, but I believe that one reason I hadn't may have been that whenever I did try to think about those things, I was always so puzzled as to how they could have happened in that way that I gave up in despair. With the simple, clear, natural explanations that I now have, I feel much more sure of myself."

"This study has certainly increased the religious value of the Bible for me. I had been troubled and vexed by the inconsistencies; I hated the thought of miracles, yet I felt it my duty to force myself into some sort of semi-acceptance of them. I am glad to have been shown how inessential they are."

"I always believed that everything in the Bible was absolutely true until I read 'The Awakening of Helena Ritchie.' In this story David asks Dr. Lavendar, 'How

could there be light on the second day when the sun, moon and stars weren't made until the fourth? That simple question set me thinking. I began to notice verses that seemed to me very improbable and soon lost faith in the Bible. This course of study has restored the Bible to me by helping me to understand how those disturbing verses came to be there."

An unfortunate result of conservative training is that many students after such experiences as the above come to feel a loss of respect for the church which permitted them to be taught in a way which they later recognize as mistaken. Scores of them ask, "Why don't they teach this in the church? Don't the ministers know it?" or "Why in the world doesn't the church tell us these things are so and not make so much trouble for us later on?"

There is a third group for whom the older type of teaching results not in a struggle between the sacredness of religion and the sacredness of truth, not in a search to find a religion that can stand four-square to all the winds that blow, but in something far harder to deal with—a general indifference to religion of any sort. They may call themselves Christians, they may keep up a formal connection with the church and attend its services, but for them, just as truly as for the first group mentioned, the real interests of life lie elsewhere. They might not recognize any intellectual difficulties, or acknowledge that a certain type of religious teaching had produced this result, but it might be just as true nevertheless, that religion had come to seem to them a thing aloof, unreal, because through faulty training it had never been brought into intimate speaking terms with the rest of life. Some will say, "But this religious lukewarmness which we all deplore is due to a score of reasons." Granted—but this is one of the score and each one deserves most careful consideration. That

which presents itself to the reason as a barrier too high to scale does not merely keep fruitful ideas from the mind; it keeps commitment and determination from the will, warmth and zest from the emotions; religion never gets a chance at all the will or all the feelings any more than at all the mind. Mr. Brewster says, "Six days in the week we live in an ordered world. On the seventh, we open the church door on a land of topsy-turvy, where axes float, dry sticks change to serpents, cities are let down out of the sky, angels stir the water of wells, bedeviled swine run violently into the sea. . . . The inevitable result is 'the seeming unreality of the spiritual life.'" This kind of harm has been done long before students get to college in many cases and it is difficult to get them to take more than a mild interest in religion thereafter. It is important to realize that as a rule it is not a rigid theory of the infallibility of the Bible's every word which has done the harm (only a small percent nowadays report definite teaching of that sort about the Bible); it is rather the lack of any teaching that would have related the Bible to our twentieth century world.

The unrest among many of the more thoughtful of our young people, the sense of dissatisfaction with much that the older generation has accepted is very evident. Professor William E. Hocking, who is in close touch with Harvard students, says, "One is aware of a keen wind astir, seeming to bring with it a demand for substance in place of husks, for contemporaneous insight instead of mere inheritance, which may well warn all doctors of religion that a time of reckoning is at hand." Perhaps, if the Master were here today he would say to many of our religious leaders as he said to those of his own day, "Ye know how to discern the face of heaven, but ye cannot discern the signs of the times." (Mat. 16; 3.)

It must be emphasized again that college students are not the only people whose experience shows need for a different sort of early teaching than most receive. The chance has recently been given to interview on religious matters tens of thousands of young men from all walks of life and of all grades of intelligence in both the United States and the British Isles and what do we learn? The reports on religion among men in the army from both sides of the water agree that while positive unbelief is very uncommon and most men have some sort of religion there is still very little cause for satisfaction because a religion that links itself in any vital or controlling way with life is rare. "If a vote were taken among chaplains as to the most serious failure of the church evidenced in the army, a large majority would agree that it was the church's failure as a teacher."<sup>1</sup> In a very thoughtful little book, "As Tommy Sees Us," by A. Herbert Gray, one of the most successful war chaplains, is a study of the reasons for this indifference. He says, "Many men find themselves almost hopelessly mystified as they try to approach religion! Surely something must have gone wrong with our presentation of the Christian faith! In the billets and huts of France our men have been grappling with a hundred questions, nearly all of them irrelevant to the heart of Christian truth. We have allowed the truth that saves to become terribly laden with incumbrances. Surely it is wholly pathetic that men who would fain rest in the comfort of a Christian faith should to this day be worrying about the parable of Jonah and his annoying whale, or about the historicity of the early chapters in Genesis, or about the quaint idea that there is science in the Old Testament, which ought somehow to be capable of reconciliation with modern science."

<sup>1</sup> Report of Religion among American Men in the Army.



Dr. Gray mentions one aspect of the problem which is particularly serious, namely that we are obliging our young people to spend their energy in thrashing out problems which have been so largely settled. We are forcing them to do over again what their fathers or grandfathers did before them, when there are vital problems unsolved and pressing for solution to which young and old together should be turning with all the freshness of their strength and all the wisdom of their years. It is distressing to see our young men and women discussing the warfare between religion and science or the verbal inspiration of the Bible as if those were the vital issues of our day, while the question whether we shall make a spiritual or a materialistic interpretation of life and whether we can make the Christian principles of good-will and respect for personality triumph in a world weak and wasted by hatred and selfishness, are allowed to wait. It is as if we had sat up all night to discuss the issues of the Civil War in those days when the Great War was upon us.

Several things are steadily growing more clear to large numbers of those who are devoted to the cause of Christ.

(1) We are dissatisfied with the progress of the Christian movement. The Christian church has not been growing in numbers, power or prestige at a rate that gives us any measure of contentment. More distressing, Christian principles have affected only in the slightest degree the realms of international and industrial life. And always there remains the great problem of the nations not yet Christian even in name.

(2) We cannot make worthy progress by using only the middle-aged and elderly Christians. We need the strength, the hardihood, the venturesomeness, the enthusiasm of youth to aid in the battle if the Christ spirit is ever to dominate our world. "The prudent and the wise will

never build the kingdom. Nor will the merely learned and devout. The great imperial enterprises of the kingdom are still before us and they seem hopelessly beyond the power of ordinary church people. We must have these brethren of the reckless will and the daring heart or we shall fail."<sup>2</sup>

(3) We are losing too many young people at present. Church work and the mission enterprise are chiefly controlled by the older generations. Christianity has only a formal hold or none at all on multitudes of young men and women of fine quality and rich capabilities.

(4) Our loss of the young is in part due to cautious efforts to hold the older folks in positions of leadership in the congregations and as financial supporters. We fear to disturb their peace of mind, to shock or distress them by the introduction of departures from the traditional ideas in which they were brought up and to which they naturally cling.

(5) If we are really to win the younger generation we must do many things differently. We must be less confident that what has been best for us is best for them. We must be ready to study them and the present day with an open and enquiring mind. We must ask what kind of religion really "gets them" with a permanent hold. One can teach anything to a child and to a certain extent he takes it. The real test comes with youth and manhood, when the youth decides whether he will be a loyal working member of the church, when the man decides whether the principles of Christ shall guide him in business and politics. In war days when one wished to be of most help to a lad starting "over there," one took pains to learn what the conditions of his life would be, what he could carry and what use, instead of loading

<sup>2</sup> A. Herbert Gray, *As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 48.

him down with things which in our very different circumstances we had found of value to us. So in giving them a start in religion, we must remember that more important than what we give is what they take and more important than what they take is what they keep and use. The trinkets or the ideas that reflect only our love for them and not also our understanding of them, may be left behind on the march or in camp.

It may be thought that the criticisms which have been made of the usual teaching in Church schools and homes come too easily to one who looks out on the world from within college walls and expects everything to center around the intellectual interests which predominate in academic circles. It may also be thought that it is very easy for one who works with young people to exaggerate the importance of youth and their views of life and to expect the older group to adjust itself to them more than is necessary. I wish, therefore, to include some statements from well-known ministers of different denominations, two of whom at least are facing all the complex problems of handling a church full of old and young, conservative and advanced, in an age of transition. Rev. Wm. P. Merrill, in a sermon preached in the Brick Presbyterian Church of New York, said, "Where is there a church that does not feel the strain that comes when its young people go away to spend their formative years in distant schools and colleges? What problem is more vital for the future of the church, than the question how to keep the youth of our churches loyal to the church and its mission, while they are studying in our educational institutions? Here, then, emerge immediate, grave, and personal responsibilities that concern every one of us. When a boy or girl goes from his home church to spend from four to seven years at educational institutions, and comes back disturbed

in his faith and uncertain in his beliefs, out of touch with the church, it is not just or wise for the church to throw the entire blame back upon the college. Why did not that church foresee the problem that boy was to face? Why did it not present the Christian religion to him in terms compatible with the truth as it would come to him in school and college? The Christian religion is capable of being stated in such a way that it can live in hearty and self-respecting fellowship with modern science. And the church is not beginning to meet its grave responsibility for oversight of the souls of its youth, until it is going to the extreme limit of possibility in presenting the truth of Christ in terms that do not clash with the truth of modern science.

"I speak out of many years of experience with college youth at summer conferences. I have found very many young men and women earnestly religious at heart, loving Christ and wanting to serve Him, who have told me that it seemed utterly impossible to go back to their home churches and fit into the life and work of those churches. They would not be welcome there unless they would submit their minds to a yoke of traditional belief, impossible to be worn by any one trained in modern sciences. It is the business of the church, for the sake of Christ and in the very spirit of the missionary enterprise, to put the Gospel in language and thought-forms which will meet the needs of these young men and women.

"In any church where the attempt is being made to hold knowledge and religion together and to show that essential Christianity can get on well with modern science, some of the older people, settled in their views, contented with the statements and forms they have always known, may grow restive at times over the continual stirring of these new ideas. Let them remember that one of the

first concerns of the church is to minister to the growing spiritual life of the young. It was Christ who set the child in the midst. No preacher and no church is rightly discharging the function of Christian ministry today, who is not most concerned with the spiritual culture of the young."

The Very Rev. Howard C. Robbins, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, speaks in no less positive terms:

"Neglect of the Bible must be attributed chiefly to the fact that the results of Biblical criticism are not widely known—for this failure the Church is itself largely to blame. The clergy have neglected their great teaching function, being given to overmuch preaching. There has been timidity, the fear of upsetting old people by calling into question traditional opinions, when the real and grave danger was of upsetting young people by not telling enough of the truth. . . . There is one straight way back, that is fearless, reverent, candid study of the Bible in the historical spirit, as of a progressive revelation of God which requires for its understanding every gift of mind as well as of heart."

The Rev. F. J. Foakes-Jackson in a recent address to a group of ministers brought a direct challenge to the church:

"Hitherto the church has failed most in the way religion has been imparted to the young and it may be said it is still failing. It is hardly a paradox to say that it has failed most where it appears to have succeeded best, because it has instilled into the mind of children prejudices which they have never been able to shake off, or principles which have made them disgusted with all religion when they come to years of discretion. How to remedy this is the most pressing problem of the day; for,

unless a cure can be found, it is fatal for the future of Christianity. That we are working at the problem is to me a most hopeful sign."

There is an old camp-meeting song which is sung with great fervor, "The old-time religion, the old-time religion, the old-time religion is good enough for me. It was good enough for Noah (Moses, David, Daniel, etc., etc., through interminable verses) and it's good enough for me." But since the "old-time religion" does not satisfy entirely the present generation, it is for us who would be honest to them and fair with them to find the way to give them "a new-time religion," "new" only in its adjustment to modern thinking, "old-time" still in its power over the hearts of men, and in its loyalty to its Master. Difficult enough the task is, to be sure, but earnestness and perseverance well salted with tact, common-sense and kindness will find the way to make Tennyson's words come true:

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell,  
That mind and heart according well,  
May make one music as before,—but vaster.

## CHAPTER III

### OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPTIONS OF NATURE

THE teacher is faced with a problem as soon as he opens his Bible. How shall he deal with the accounts of creation which he finds in the first chapters of Genesis?

A basal principle which is presupposed throughout this book is that there is no one right way of dealing with Biblical material for all ages alike. The developing child must always be our first study.<sup>1</sup> If one is dealing with boys and girls over eight years of age one must realize that they are likely to be learning in school something of the processes of nature. They have reached an age when they are interested in discriminating between fact and imagination, when they want to know what things really happened and what didn't. Their reasoning powers are developing rapidly and "questions shower upon us unless our children are either asleep or afraid." In what light should we teach them to regard these Biblical accounts of the origin of the world and of man? We cannot present Genesis 1 and 2 as giving correct information in every respect, but if we point out the many mistakes when compared with scientific theories of today, will the result be either loss of respect for the Bible stories or of interest in them? It would seem clear that the way out of both difficulties is to help children to distinguish between knowledge of the world we see and realization of the worth

<sup>1</sup> A few books which give the facts of child psychology are listed in the appendix.

of the things we cannot see and then to recognize that the Hebrew's contribution is in the latter realm. This must be more simply stated of course. It might be presented something like this: "We are studying the early writings of the Hebrew people who were very much like us in one respect: there were many different kinds of things they wanted to know. They wanted some way to explain everything they saw with their eyes and touched with their hands, everything in what we call the world of nature. They wondered, as we wonder, how everything came to be just as it is. They wished to know what happened first and what next, as we do. They answered these questions in the best way they could, but they didn't then have telescopes or microscopes to use or laboratories to work in. Even with these instruments we make many mistakes and we would make many more if we didn't have them. Of course, living as they did, long before these things were invented, they were bound to make mistakes. We men since that time have had many centuries in which to go to school and we have the advantage of all they have learned. So we know more than the early Hebrews did, just as a boy in High School knows more than one in the kindergarten. He would be ashamed of himself if he didn't, and though he may smile at some of the little chap's ideas, that doesn't mean that he thinks he is any better or brighter than the five year old; he has simply had more chance to learn. So we can smile at some of the Hebrew ideas, as people later doubtless will at ours."

The early Hebrew idea of the world can then be pictured and explained and compared with ours—a world which floated like a disk on the waters ("the waters under the earth," Ex. 20: 4, Ps. 24:2) and had a solid firmament above, in which windows opened when it rained (Gen. 7:11) and the "waters above the firmament" (Gen.



1:6) came down to earth. Sheol, where people went when they died, was a hollow place in the middle of the earth. Of course they thought the sun went round the earth, which was "established that it cannot be moved" (Ps. 93:1); therefore, Joshua could command the sun to stand still. They thought that everything was made in six days and that each thing made had no connection with the rest but was made by itself and was produced in the form in which we now know it (Gen. 1). This is all intelligible enough to children. It can then be contrasted with the world of which they learn something quite early in school, the measureless ages when the earth was being prepared to support life, other measureless ages when primitive forms of life were developing and still others when man was slowly coming to be. The mistakes of the Hebrews can be pointed out and children can safely be allowed to show frank amusement over such crude conceptions as that of a woman made from a man's rib.

But only half of what should be has been said. One might continue in some such way as this: "We must remember that there are other kinds of things we want to know. Besides wanting to see the stars at night through a telescope, we want to know about the God who made them, about what he is like and what he wants us to be like. We cannot see him through the telescope or hear him over the radio, but he is just as real and as important as the stars or rocks or waves that we do see or hear. We want to know what we as a people ought to do to help the people of Europe and we want to know whether it ever is right to go to war and how to improve our government. In working on these problems the Hebrews not only did as well as we, but often far better. They seemed to have a special gift which made it easier for them to understand God and his will for us than it has been for

most people. So what they have to say of God has been read again and again and used and loved through all the centuries since. Therefore when we read their stories it is really this kind of information which we want to get from them and it does not trouble us that they made some mistakes in the other kind of information. When we want facts of science, we can go to our science textbooks of to-day, so we don't need the Bible for that purpose."<sup>2</sup>

After this explanation, one might go over the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 to notice how the writers traced all things that can be seen and heard back to a great creating Spirit, how sure they were of the wisdom and goodness of God as revealed in all nature, how right they were in recognizing that man has responsibilities and possibilities that none of the other animals has, since as they tell us, he alone was made in the image of God and God's spirit lives in him. Make the children realize that the emphasis should not be placed on the errors of these early men in regard to what can be seen and heard but upon the solid truth about God and his ways contained in this "Hymn of Creation, this World's morning chant of the goodness and beauty of the Creator's activity." Then it would be well to read some other Old Testament selections which show how the Hebrews found the world speak-

<sup>2</sup> An explanation which is often given of the "days" of creation, namely, that long periods of time were meant by the word day, is open to a good deal of criticism, as a rather weak sort of compromise between the older and newer views. There is no indication that "day" did mean to the writers of Genesis anything different than the twenty-four hour day which is meant by the word elsewhere in the Bible. Even if one should accept the above explanation for those particular statements, there are still all the other evidences of mistaken ideas to account for. Such an explanation is a false start along a line that cannot be pursued very far and might better not be attempted at all. It is an effort to make the Bible appear reliable in a way in which we might as well admit frankly that it is not and was never meant to be,—as a text-book of science.

ing to them of God, of his goodness and power, his concern for men and even for animals and plants. Read the unparalleled description of the wonders of creation in Job 38 and 39, parts of some of the glorious nature psalms like 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 147 and 148 and even part of the 13th chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon (Apocrypha), in which God is called "The first author of beauty."

Help them to realize that while we know more that can be learned through the eye and ear than the Hebrews did about the way God works, we cannot feel more deeply his presence in the world about us, nor describe it half as movingly as they did.

If, however, one is working with children under eight years of age, the problem presented is a somewhat different one. Generally they know too few facts to be able to challenge statements that are made to them, but let no one assume that their minds are not actively at work. They were only three-year-olds who asked, "Mummy, what is the difference between Jesus and God?" and, "If I had gone upstairs, could God make it that I hadn't?" It was a six-year-old who, on being told of the warning that kept the baby Jesus safe, asked, "Why did God not tell all the mothers, so that they could keep their little babies safe?" To give the child the right start in his thinking about religion in these early, responsive years is being more and more recognized as important. One of the church secretaries of religious education who visits many classes and knows many teachers, says that the greatest harm is done in the kindergarten and primary departments, where many wrong first impressions are given.

We want to tell these Genesis stories so that the ideas the children get from them may be in line with the truth as it will be learned later, but such explanations as are sug-

gested for the older children would be beyond the comprehension of the average child under eight. He has little knowledge of the ways in which men are investigating nature today and little time sense that would enable him to discriminate between earlier and later ages with their differing theories. Some teachers favor trying to put such an explanation as was given above into a very simple form for the younger children, as Dean Hodges does in his "Garden of Eden." He begins the story of the creation thus: "This is the oldest story in the world. It began to be told when children began to ask questions and that was very long ago. The children said, 'Where did everything come from? Who made the hills and the sea? Who made the sun and stars?' and their fathers and mothers answered as best they could. In our time, after long study of the earth, there are wise men who know more about these things than anybody knew when the world was young. They ask the earth itself and tell us what the world says. But the oldest story is still the best, because it tells us that the world was made by God. . . . Thus the world and man came into being. The story says that God did all this in six days, but the earth says that every one of these days was millions of years long. Very, very slowly, but no less wonderfully, was the great world made." Instead of saying "the oldest story is still the best" (for it is not the best in every way), one might substitute, 'the oldest story we still value,' or something of the sort. (Some who are sticklers for accuracy would probably prefer to call it *one* of the oldest stories in the world.) The idea of presenting the accounts as stories Hebrew mothers used to tell their children long ago is a good one. It will add interest to think how many boys and girls have heard the tale, and at the same time this statement gives, in a simple way, a correct idea.

There is something to be said in favor of omitting these stories altogether at this age and waiting to tell them until their worth can be understood more fully. No doubt the world of nature is brimming over with interest to a little child of kindergarten or primary age. It is true that one of the surest ways of making religion a reality to such a child is to connect God with the wonderful, the beautiful and the kindly aspects of the world outside. But most of the wisest teachers of very young children try to establish this contact through discussion of the things which the child sees and hears; through pictures and stories for these insatiable story-lovers, stories for example, of the way the wind and the rain help in the work of the world, of the loving care the bird takes of its young, and the way the world gets ready for winter, connecting everything with the Heavenly Father, and occasionally using a brief sentence from the Bible to go with the story, like "The sea is his and he made it," or "The day is thine; the night also is thine."

This is better in many ways than telling the first chapter of Genesis, which has very slight story element and crowds so many facts into its condensed account that the little child finds it difficult to grasp them. Some teachers, however, claim that the rhythmical form and constant repetition of phrase please even the kindergarten child. If either chapter one or two is to be used, the first is preferred by most for this reason and also because chapter two contains the incident of the woman made from the rib of the man, which certainly should not be used until the children are old enough to be interested in it as a quaint and curious old story. It gives just the kind of detail that the child's vivid imagination will fasten on, retain and be puzzled by. It can add nothing to the thought of God conveyed by the simple, dignified and true statement

in Genesis I, "Male and female created he them." However, if told it must be, the teacher should keep in mind that which will be a guide to her over and again in dealing with Bible stories for young children, namely that the spiritual truth which the story is to convey should be kept uppermost and the bare, outer facts kept incidental. A good illustration of the emphasis on externals which is to be avoided is given by Hetty Lee in "Present Day Problems in Religious Education." The teacher "illustrated" the creation of Eve by a large blackboard drawing of a bone and said, "You see that bone, children. God wanted to make a woman for Adam. . . . So he made Adam go to sleep and he took a little bone out of his side, just like this one, children, and he made it into a woman! You couldn't make a woman out of a bone, could you, children?" Certainly this is the poorest way possible to tell it. The emphasis should be on the spiritual truth of God as Creator of all and interested in meeting man's needs. Otherwise if the child ever comes to question the facts, what has he left?

On the other hand, if one is working with young people, the explanations suggested for older children could be developed more fully, and opportunity given for class discussion. Between the years of sixteen and twenty, interest in abstract questions such as the progress of human thought and endeavor, the comparison of ideas of different individuals or different ages usually develops. There is also a growing sense of independence in thinking, of responsibility for deciding what one does think, that ought to be recognized and utilized by the teacher of religion.

Some young people (and some older children as well) would be very much interested in finding in Gen. 2 (beginning with vs. 4) a second and earlier account of crea-

tion than that related in Gen. 1. A comparison of the two, as to literary style, the facts and order of creation, the name and conception of the deity, will enable most intelligent young people to discover for themselves that we have not one "Bible" account of creation, one reliable revelation of the facts, but two quite different stories, showing us the way the Hebrews were thinking in two different centuries, one much later than the other. When this is recognized, we are in a position to look for the religious ideas in both as the real element of value, rather than for the scientific ideas in either.

In most groups of the adolescent age and indeed in the case of many boys and girls of ten or over one can count on an interest in the religious significance of the theory of evolution. A study of the early chapters of Genesis leads naturally to this topic. There is gain rather than loss, it can be pointed out, in the change from the special creation theory; for the length and complexity of the process, as we now understand it, bears witness to the wisdom and foresight and long, long patience of God. Something immeasurably precious must have been preparing in all these aeons and the challenge comes to us to continue the progress in the higher life of man, and so do our bit to make the whole process worth while. The well known poem, "Some call it evolution and others call it God" can be utilized to give the idealistic conception of evolution. It might be well, however, to bring out the fact that those who call it evolution may likewise, also call it God.

We must never let the idea become implanted in the minds of young people that our modern science stands over against the Bible—that evolution is sufficient for us now, without religion. As soon as they are old enough to understand what evolution means at all, they can un-

derstand that it is merely a theory which partially (and probably in some ways incorrectly as yet) explains, among other things, *how man came to be what he is*. The more important question of what the process is for, what man is worth, what his responsibilities are, now that he has become what he is, science does not pretend to touch. Those are questions for religion. The two inquiries are worth making but they are quite distinct. However, since the same mind must deal with both, and since each has something to contribute to the other, they cannot be kept in separate compartments.

One further suggestion as to the Biblical ideas of nature that might be used as evidence of the oneness of human experience is the Hebrew's sense of the unsolved mysteries suggested by the vastness and complexity of nature. They never in their childlike ignorance, supposed they "knew it all," as ignorance often does. They felt an uplifting and expanding sense of wonder at the thought that they were "fearfully and wonderfully made," which makes them brother to the biologist of today. With the Psalmist of old we must still cry, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain unto it." (Ps. 139.) Any such conviction common to us and to the Hebrews is worth setting side by side in study with features in their knowledge that separate us from them.



## CHAPTER IV

### LEGENDARY MATERIAL IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

WHAT shall we do with the large amount of material in the Old Testament that was handed down by word of mouth for so long a time before it was written? Though there is often an historical nucleus, this material cannot strictly speaking be called history or biography, since we cannot rely on its statements of fact in detail. Definitions vary, but the terms myth, legend, folk tale, are freely used by scholars to apply to such stories as those in Genesis, many in Exodus and Numbers, some in Joshua, at least the Samson stories in Judges and to some sections of later books. Should these terms be used with children? What are the dangers, if any, in so doing? Is there any advantage in so presenting this material? Are any precautions necessary?

Some hesitate to let children get the idea that these things did not happen just as recorded. One minister says, "I call them stories, but I never use the word legend." Why should the word legend be considered dangerous or undesirable in the religious vocabulary? It must be because the word seems perilously near to other words like "untrue," or "untrustworthy," which sound hostile to faith. The fear is that the reaction will be, "Perhaps it never happened, then what's the good of it?" One teacher of senior girls goes to the heart of the difficulty when he says of his pupils, "One of their commonest questions is,

"How can we tell what parts of the Bible are true and what parts are legendary?" I am not sure that I have succeeded in making them understand that that is a false antithesis." But if one can convince them that "true" and "legendary" is a false antithesis, that the word "historical" must be set over against "legendary," and that legend is a very fit vehicle (in some ways far more fit than history) for expressing religious truth, then the word legend and the idea which it connotes would not need to be shunned in religious teaching, but could be used as freely as the word hymn or prayer. How to accomplish this is the problem for the teacher of legend. Granted that it can be accomplished, there is gain of several kinds in recognizing this material as legendary.

First, a larger and finer conception of truth is acquired, the conception that truth can come to men in a multitude of ways, instead of being limited to the mediums of history and science.

In myriad ways, by myriad names,  
Men seek to bind and hold thee,  
But thou dost melt like wax in flames  
The cords that would enfold thee.

So truth comes to men, in spite of the prosaic and rigid limitations they try to set up. No more important lesson can be found in any Bible story than this realization about all stories. The child should be so taught that he never gets the idea that truth conveyed through literal fact of science or history is on a higher level than truth conveyed through the forms of the imagination. Let boys and girls, with their awakening interest in "the thing that is really so," learn that what is really so may be put into the form of poetry, fable, wonder-story, myth or legend.

Secondly, the miracle stories, the mistaken scientific conceptions, the crude and unworthy thoughts of God which are found so often in these legendary sections, can be more easily dealt with and that is no small gain. If it is understood that all this material comes from a very ancient past and was handed on by word of mouth, sometimes for centuries before being written down, one does not have to separate these special elements so carefully from the material in which they are embedded. One does not have to give so many separate explanations, for all the explanations are related and made consistent when it is understood that this material shows us how, at certain times, men thought about nature, about their heroes, about God; that their thinking is interesting always, is sometimes true to fact of science or history and sometimes not, is sometimes true to what we, taught by Jesus Christ, know of God, and sometimes not.

Others would give as a third reason for teaching that legend is legend, the reason of Pompilia in the "Ring and the Book," "The truth for the truth's sake, lest men should believe a lie," and would feel bound to teach the truth as they saw it (provided no losses for the child mind were involved), even if no immediate gains for faith were evident. Still another reason is that there will always be some children of a critical and independent turn of mind, who will doubt the stories if presented as history. Many a college student has said, as one did recently, "I was told these stories as true, but somehow or other, I never did believe them. They never *sounded* true to me, they were so strange and different from other stories. Because I didn't believe them, I didn't get anything out of them. Now that I find I can take them as legend, they have value for the first time." Some students have said they found it hard to respect other truths pre-

sented by the teachers whose word they had come to doubt in this regard.

How, then, would one, convinced that this is the wisest plan, go about teaching the stories? Some children under eight years of age are so engrossed in the story that they do not concern themselves with the question whether it really happened or not. But others, even at five or six, do try to make distinctions between different kinds of stories and one must always be prepared for the question that may come at any time, "Is this story true?" Professor Coe writes, "I have heard children in the second grade ask, 'Is this a "once-upon-a-time" story?' There is considerable evidence that still younger children live consciously in a literal world that is differentiated from the story world. The wrestling with the problem of veracity occasionally shows that they do, as when a little boy said to his mother, 'You tell me stories and then I tell you stories. You understand, but Margaret (the nurse), when I tell her stories, says, 'You naughty boy.'"

Whether children ask such questions as the above or not, the teacher must always remember that he is building for the future. As stated before, a reliable foundation stone for later knowledge to rest on is the presentation of Bible tales as old, oft told and much loved stories. This can be enlarged on by telling the children that, just as they have not yet learned to write, so there was a time long ago, when even the grown people did not know how to write, and so they had to tell from memory the stories they wanted to preserve. One can picture the shepherds telling stories to each other as they watched the sheep through the long nights under the brilliant Oriental sky, travelers exchanging tales as they took the long journeys afoot or on mule back, women telling stories as they met at the springs or fountains and stopped to

talk for a while, and always the children, eager for stories then as now. Such an introduction will be interesting in itself, add to rather than detract from the story and at the same time lead naturally to the next step, when they are nine or ten years of age. If the question comes earlier, "Is it true?" one good way of answering is, "*It tells* us what is true, it tells us God likes to have us do so and so." Or, "Perhaps it never happened, but it tells us something that is true just the same," or, "I am not sure whether (or I don't suppose) this particular thing ever happened in just this way, but I don't care as much to find that out as to learn what it tells us about God." Or, "It is true the way the story of the Good Samaritan (if that is familiar) is true; it tells us how we ought to help each other."

The one thing to avoid is an answer put wholly in the negative form. It is easy to reach under the facts of a story and draw out its essential truth, or better still, to help the child to do that and express it for himself. An illustration of what is meant can be given in the kind of explanation of Santa Claus that will leave a child feeling, not that he had been deceived formerly and that the Santa Claus story is not true, but that it still suggests a truth in a beautiful way. When the child seriously questions whether there is a Santa Claus, one may explain that the Santa in the stores or at the Church School Christmas tree is only some one playing Santa Claus. No one ever saw the real Santa Claus for that would be impossible, since that is the name we use for the spirit of love and giving that we feel at Christmas time. That is very real and true; all the rest is just for fun, since it is such fun to pretend. If the suggestion is made that the child should pretend to be Santa Claus for some one else and send some gifts or fill a stocking it has been found that he

takes up the idea with avidity. One teacher reports a child saying, "Why, playing Santa Claus is very much like being the Christ Child, isn't it?" How much better that is than telling them there is no Santa Claus!

The older children, through their natural growth and through their study of history in school are sure to be interested in making distinctions between what did once actually happen in the way told and what did not. How can one help them while distinguishing history from legend in the Bible to value both? It may be well if one is to use a number of legends, to give some time to a preliminary discussion of the subject in order to impart the right general idea and then it need not be repeated with each separate story. One might begin by recalling that there was a time when men could not write and then when very few could write and writing materials were scarce. Information about the past was handed on by story-telling in the ways suggested above. "Suppose we were still doing so and that you wanted to find out about Abraham Lincoln's freeing the slaves. Instead of going to the library and looking it up in a book, you would have to ask different people to tell you the stories they had heard about Lincoln. One would be able to tell you one thing and another something else; perhaps after you had heard a story from your uncle, a friend would tell the same story, but tell it a little differently and if you should say, 'But my uncle just told me that story and he told it in this way,' your friend might reply, 'Well, this is the way I heard it, that's all I know.' You would have no way of deciding between the two, but would have to use both. You may be thinking, 'But if stories had to take the place of books, those people must have taken great pains to tell the stories just right and then the stories would be all alike.' But you must remember two things—

one that it is very difficult to remember *exactly* what we hear (though Oriental memories were probably better than ours, since they had to depend upon them more than we do), and that the only way to keep a story 'just so' is to write it down at once. Especially if you are not trying very hard to keep it 'just so,' the natural thing as you tell it is to emphasize what interests you and pass over what doesn't and add explanations here and there to show how you understand it. Suppose I should tell a long story to the class now about some boys and girls who were taken for a trip to California and should tell you how they were dressed and about all the things they saw and heard and then you should go home and tell it to your brothers and sisters." One can go ahead to illustrate the different things the boys and girls in the class would probably tell about and how they would put a little of themselves into the telling, and then if those brothers and sisters went and told it at school to their friends, how it would be changed a bit again. "So the stories told for centuries would change and grow in the telling and the form we have now in the Bible is not the way they were told in the first place, but the way they were told at the time when they were at last written down.

"Secondly, we must remember that we are different in many ways from those early peoples. Just as we dress differently than they did and live in different kinds of houses, so do our minds work a little differently. One difference is that we care more now to know *just exactly* what happened than they did. As a group of men and women listened to a story being told, long, long ago, they did not say, 'I wonder if that is quite correct; I doubt if it happened just that way. I must find out whether that is so or not.' They listened and said, 'Isn't that a good story! Aren't we glad that we have such great

ancestors! Isn't it wonderful that our people were preserved by God from the dangers that threatened them?" But we care more for accurate history now. The men who write our history books take great pains and study sometimes for years to find out just exactly what happened.<sup>1</sup>

"If the stories told were the kind they liked, they listened and loved them and wanted them again, without troubling about their reliability. But naturally they passed on only the stories they did like. A story teller wasn't going to waste his time in boring his audience. He liked to see their faces light up and their eyes shine as they did when a story pleased his listeners. Therefore we can tell a great deal from the stories in the Bible about what most interested the Hebrew people. And we learn something very important; we learn that they always cared very much to hear about God and how he took care of them and they always wanted to know whether they were doing as he wished them to or not." (If the children are familiar with the Greek stories the comparison can be made of the interests of the Hebrews and Greeks—the Greek stories of Hercules showing how they admired physical prowess and the stories of Ulysses how they loved tales of adventure and travel, but none of them revealing that consuming desire to know of the character and will of God that we find in the Hebrew stories.) "Because

<sup>1</sup>Thus one can bring out quite simply the truth that Professor Shotwell states in his *Introduction to the History of History*, pp. 8, 9, 19: "Credulity is a natural attitude of mind; criticism is one of the most difficult acquisitions of culture. . . . History, the science, . . . paralleling other scientific work, has come to the front in our own age. Impartial, . . . weighing documents, accumulating evidence . . . it is piecing together with infinite care the broken mosaic of the past,—not to teach us lessons, nor to entertain, but simply to fulfill the imperative demand of the scientific spirit—to find the truth and set it forth."



the Hebrew people knew more about God than others, they could tell us things that are still true today and that is the reason their stories have always been read by people who want to know about God. When we read the stories which are called legends we must always remember that the men who wrote them down and decided what ones to put in the Bible didn't care to ask, 'Now am I sure this thing really happened just so?' but, 'Will this story please people and help them to know how to live better and make them want to try hard to please God?' If so, they put the story in the Bible. And as we read them now our main question must be the mate to theirs, 'Is this a good story and will it help me to live right and to know what God is like?' If so, we will be glad it is in the Bible. Later on, a great deal of real Hebrew history was written down, very near the time too when the events happened and we are glad it was, because we like to know what did occur. Even though it tells us truth about the wars and defeats and victories and the doings of their kings and gives us the dates, it is not quite as useful as the legends are, for telling us how men thought about God.<sup>2</sup> For just because so many people who loved God and wanted to do right, told the legends and put something of themselves into the telling, the legends came to express what many people thought, not just what one person thought. A history story can only tell us what was true

<sup>2</sup> So Prof. J. A. Bewer says in his *Literature of the Old Testament* (Columbia Univ. Press, p. 50), "All these Elijah stories are legends which the people told about this spiritual hero. . . . They give us perhaps a truer picture of the greatness of the prophet than a strictly historical, matter-of-fact presentation could have done. Here the impression that this moral and spiritual giant made upon his people is given; their enthusiasm and admiration have idealized, heightened and enlarged his personality, and yet their interpretation showed the deepest insight because it was born out of affection and awe."

once—a legend can tell us what is true all the time. Just as we have history about King Arthur which tells us that he was king in England—something that was true once—so we have also legends of King Arthur which tell us that men should be brave and chivalrous, which is true all the time.” After some such explanation, the class can go ahead to study the material in question for its human interest and its truth, without bothering over the question whether it really happened. They can understand that living so long after it all happened as we do and having no way now of going back and asking questions and often no book but the Bible to consult, we can’t always be sure what is legend and what history, or how much in a legend may be based on actual facts and how much have grown with the telling. That is so with material much later than the Bible. How men have puzzled over the stories of William Tell and Pocahontas to try to find out upon how much fact they rest!

The good substantial basis of fact in the accounts of the sojourn in Egypt, the wilderness period and entrance into Canaan should be made clear, but it seems hardly necessary to spend any time with boys and girls in trying to distinguish the historical from the legendary in the stories of the patriarchs in Genesis, because there is still some difference of opinion among scholars on this point and because the meanings of the stories and their relation to the children’s own problems are so much more important. Simply to say that there is probably some legendary element (after that word is understood), but it is difficult to say how much, is often sufficient answer to a question whether this or that really happened.

If it seems inadvisable to attempt any such general explanation as that given above, the right impression can be given very simply in connection with the separate

stories. As an example take Dean Hodges' stories of Daniel in the "Castle of Zion." "When the Hebrew children sat round the fire at night and said, 'Father, tell what happened to our people when they lived in the land of Babylon,' they were told some of the most wonderful stories in the world." (He gives several.) "'But father,' said the Hebrew children, 'Did these wonders really happen? Did Nebuchanezzar eat grass like an ox? Did the hand write on the wall? Did the Lord deliver his servants from the fiery furnace and from the den of lions?' And the father said, 'Children, I was not there, and my grandfather who told me the stories was not there either. But this was true then and is true today, that the Lord humbles the proud and brings down the mighty from their seats and saves those who trust in him out of all their troubles.'" Notice how simply he gives them the idea of uncertainty attaching to stories handed down by word of mouth and then turns their attention to the real truth of the stories.

There might well be different opinions as to whether there is any gain in suggesting to children that some facts in regard to relationships, characteristics and migrations of races and tribes are given us in Genesis in the form of stories about individuals. Many would prefer to leave that to come as an added element of interest in the years of adolescence and would not raise the question at all with children. It is not one of the really important questions, they would say, and scholars do not entirely agree in their opinions; let us leave it to those who in later life have time for puzzling out the more recondite problems of historical criticism. To the mature and intelligent student, the character values are there anyway, whether the stories are of tribes or individuals, but for children such values are far more evident if they can

think of real men and women, fathers and children, brothers and servants. One only befogs the issue and confuses their minds by suggesting that if you look hard at an individual, he or she fades into a tribe.

Some college students find it very difficult to reconcile themselves to the conclusions of scholars in regard to these stories. "I have always thought of Benjamin as Joseph's little brother and I don't want to give him up for any tribe;" is a typical statement. Some teachers will say, "There, that is good evidence that the early teaching was mistaken, for if the value of the ideals presented in the stories had been successfully portrayed, they would stand by their own worth, whether associated with individuals or tribes." There is no use dodging the issue, it matters not a whit whether the stories represent tribes or individuals. Men and women wrought out these things in their own lives, learned (as seen in the Abraham stories) that "his will is our peace," and that no possessions, however dear, can compensate for the loss of a sense of God's approval; learned (as seen in the Joseph stories) that "forgiveness is better than spite." It is more significant to realize that many Hebrews came to recognize these truths than it is to assert that some one individual known to us by name, did go through the experiences related here. We live by our ideals and those ideals may be brought home to us in a thousand ways. Give children this conception as early as possible and do not tie the ideal up with any one illustration of it. Then there would never need to be any sense of loss or dismay when later they realized that Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph might not be historical individuals.

Rhondda Williams, in his "Old Testament Stories in Modern Light," introduces this idea to children by pointing out first how unbrotherly the different pairs of brothers

in Genesis are—Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers (when Joseph was young), and Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who are in competition for their grandfather's blessing. "So in the age of the patriarchs we have not a single pair of brothers that we can look up to and say, 'You be like them.' Is it not very difficult to believe that there were not some brothers in that old world that loved each other? Surely there must have been. Then why did not the Bible writers pick out some of these to hold up as an example to the world? I think the explanation is that what we have, in these old stories, in some measure, is the history of tribes and their actual relations, put in the form of the history of single persons. For instance, some of the things that are said about Cain were perhaps true, not just of one man, but of a tribe, the Kenites; what is said about Ishmael is partly true of the Ishmaelites. I tell you this so that you may not think of that old world as not having any real brothers in it. It was, of course, a rude, rough time and there were many wars between tribes and a great deal of jealousy, enmity and revengefulness. But you may be sure there were also human feelings of the better sort and not a few men would act toward each others as real brothers." It is a clever stroke to make the shift from individuals to tribes not with the admirable, but with the unpleasant traits of the patriarchs, where it comes as rather a relief to think that it was the group, instead of the individual brothers who were jealous and quarrelsome. We are so used to that spirit in our national groups today that it does not disturb us (perhaps as much as it ought!) to find it there in early days also.

The problem of the first eleven chapters in Genesis is a somewhat different one from that of chapters twelve to

fifty and many who would have some doubt about the patriarchs would feel sure that it is not wise to teach children the stories of the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the Tower of Babel and the flood as records of fact, but to treat them as ancient stories of the beginnings of things. The disagreements would come on the minor questions; for example, shall we use the term myth and recognize it as well as legend as a member in good and regular standing of our religious vocabulary? Many would say yes, holding myth to be a more accurate description of some of these stories than any other word and believing that if the child is accustomed to its use by his teacher of religion, he will be forearmed against any disparaging use of it by sceptics. He can then never be shocked by hearing that there are myths in the Bible, if he has learned to find value in them and to appraise them at their true worth. Others think this is making unnecessarily fine distinctions for any but advanced classes and consider that the term legend covers all the primitive tales with sufficient accuracy.

Disagreements come again when we raise the question of the advisability of recognizing the Babylonian origin of the external structure of some of the Hebrew stories, particularly that of the flood. A comparison with the Babylonian story offers a way of making the study of the Hebrew account valuable, for the older children at least, and there is no need of telling the story at all to the youngest children. One can easily point out the great similarities in the external facts of the Babylonian and Hebrew stories. He can then proceed to show how noble and fine the Hebrew story is when compared to the Babylonian as to the nature and character of God (gods in the Babylonian), the purpose of the flood and the reason for the saving of the one man. The true insight of the

Hebrews in discarding the unworthy elements and in making the same story express their higher conceptions can be made very impressive, whereas the story viewed by itself, falls so far short of Christian ideals that it is difficult to find positive values in it. A suggestion as to how to introduce this information in a simple and constructive way is given in Dean Hodges' "Child's Guide to the Bible." "We know that these stories were brought from the old home of the Hebrews in the east, because some of them are found there still. They had a way in the old time, of making books of brick. They would take a soft brick and stamp on to it the letters of the words and sentences and when the brick was hard, there was the writing in a lasting form. Evidently a brick book will go unharmed through fire and water which would destroy our books of paper. In the ruins of the cities which were destroyed centuries ago are found brick books in which these stories were written and the stories themselves were already centuries old when they were thus written in brick. There are important differences, however, between the stories which are found on bricks in Nineveh or Babylon and those which we read in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. It is like painting pictures. In order to paint a picture, one must have a canvas and a brush and various kinds of paint, but two artists may have all this alike and be painting the same scene and yet make very different pictures. For the picture depends, after all, on the painter. A great painter is one to whom God has given a gift which is called genius. He knows what to do and how to do it, what to bring into his picture and what to leave out." One can then go on to show that that is the difference between the stories as we find them in the libraries of the Babylonians and in

the Bible, for the Hebrews had the gift of religious genius which made them see more clearly than the Babylonians what was true and right. Therefore when they told over again to their children those old stories which their grandfathers had heard, they put their own better ideas into them.

Most teachers do not favor using the Babylonian story which is very similar to that of the baby Moses in the bulrushes, but Rhondda Williams has found a way of utilizing these many similar stories so as to make the Hebrew story yield richer values for the older boys and girls than it could by itself. His method would of course not be wise to use with the younger children but those over nine or ten who would find the familiar story in Exodus babyish or tiresome if it were taught again in the usual fashion, would take a fresh interest in it if presented in Mr. Williams' way.<sup>3</sup> He begins, "If I were to tell you today the story of a little child put in a reed basket on the banks of a river who, instead of being drowned, grew up to be a man of great importance to his nation, and then if I asked you who he was you would all say, 'Moses.' But if you had been brought up in Japan you would not say Moses. The Japanese little children have heard a story like that, but not about Moses. If you lived in ancient Greece you would know the story, but it would bear another name still. If you had lived in ancient Babylon you would have heard the story of Sargon, the powerful king. When he was born his mother was poor and for some reason, she wanted to hide him. She made a little basket of reeds and she shut up the mouth of it with pitch and then put it on the river. The river, however, did not overflow the baby, but carried it quite safely to Akki, the irrigator. Akki received the child and nursed

<sup>3</sup>*Old Testament Stories in Modern Light*, pp. 30-31.



him to boyhood and then made him a gardener. He turned out to be so good a gardener that he was at last made king. He became the great king of Agadé. That is very like the story of the infant Moses. So you see that the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans, the Japanese and many other peoples have stories very like the Hebrew story of Moses. Some great person, who had become most important to the nation, was believed to have been set adrift on the water when he was a baby, but the providence of God had in one way or another preserved his life. The story of Moses, as you know, is a very pretty one." He continues with a review of the Bible story and then concludes, "All these stories are wonder-stories. Ancient peoples all believe that around the cradles of wonderful men there must have been a wonderful Providence watching. Then they imagined the way in which it was done. They were quite right on the main point. And it is equally true of all men, not only great men. No one ever grew from babyhood to manhood except by the power of God. We want no miracles to make life wonderful. It is a most amazing thing that a little baby can grow up to be a man or a woman. . . . No one can ever explain how the tiny body and the still tinier mind can become the fullgrown man or woman, much less the great commanding personality wielding influence over multitudes of men. We are almost dumb in the presence of such a fact and can but acknowledge God as the Giver and Preserver of life. God did take care of Moses and he also took care of you. No king threatened to kill you and you were not laid on the brink of a river, but any number of things might have killed you. It was God who preserved your life. You may not grow to be a great national deliverer; some of you may become great men and some great women and many not great at all, but

you can all grow up to honor the God who gave you life and who keeps you day by day."

With advanced classes all the above facts can be dealt with in less elementary fashion and with more group discussion of the moot points.

In conclusion it ought perhaps to be said that teaching such as is outlined here seems as reasonable and right to a child as that which insists that everything in the Bible is strictly reliable. One need not fear that children are going to be perplexed or distressed at the idea of legend or myth in the Bible. One teacher says, "I have always dealt with the first eleven chapters of Genesis as pre-historic and legendary. As far as I know, no difficulties have arisen; in fact, I think great difficulties would have been met if I had handled the matter in any other way." Another teacher of senior girls says, "With the wonder-stories I point out the pre-scientific mind of the observers and writers, illustrating by stories of the way in which primitive people today explain events which we explain in terms of natural law. I also point out the method by which the stories were gathered into the Bible and the possibility of accretions. I find that in those stories which have a moral and spiritual message in them, the message of the story is in no way impaired by giving the students an intelligent understanding of the way in which the story was set down."



## CHAPTER V

### MIRACLES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

WHAT is a miracle? To some it is a marvelous event, violating natural laws and therefore giving evidence of the presence of One who is sovereign above all laws. The miracle stories are taught as signs of God's activity, their "supernatural" character is emphasized; any attempt to explain them is considered irreverent, and bound to be unsuccessful. But to others a miracle is a marvelous event which is in harmony with laws not yet understood by us. It gives evidence of the presence of One who would not violate any law of his own making, but who works and allows his special agents in the Bible to work in accord with laws of which we are as yet in ignorance. As St. Augustine said, "A miracle does not happen in contradiction to nature, but in contradiction to what is known to us of nature." Some of the miracles in the Bible we can now see, as men like ourselves could not a century ago, were in accord with the laws of nature (for example, the faith cures), and we may later see that others were also.

The teaching problem is relatively easy for this group. "In time we may understand," will cover all the difficult cases and is an explanation that can be given to pupils of any age.

But there are others who would agree with the above position in so far as to recognize that, in Bishop Law-

rence's words,<sup>1</sup> "modern science . . . has not such a complete knowledge of God and His methods of work as to assure us that we can fathom the meaning of every act; modern psychology, modern science, recognize laws, habits and expressions of nature as yet beyond our ken; and what relation these have to the unusual or to what seem to be the suspension or breaking of natural law we know not." Yet they would hold it is also true that the miracle stories in the Old Testament furnish an illustration of the fact that science was undeveloped in these early ages, that the Hebrews were credulous and wonder-loving and that therefore men gave far different explanations of what they saw and heard than we should have, if we with our twentieth century minds had been present and seen just the same thing; furthermore the stories were handed on by word of mouth for many years and grew more rather than less miraculous in the telling. This group holds that all these things must be taken into consideration in interpreting the miracle stories. For them the teaching problem is more difficult. There the stories of the miracles stand. How can we tell them to children? Is it wise to try to give them this grown-up point of view? Would they understand it if we did try? When would it be appropriate to make the attempt? Would we not run the risk of establishing a distrust of the veracity of the writers? Can we make this view as constructive religiously as the others?

The little child loves stories and loves wonders and therefore the wonder story is a very fitting medium for conveying truth to him. Dean Hodges does well to remind us in his "Training of Children," "It is always essential to remember that children are children. A quiet, restrained, contemplative or philosophical religion, excel-

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty Years*, p. 30.

lent for adults is as remote from the interests of a child as the transactions of a bank. And an accurate and veracious religion, brought into strict accord with natural law, divested of the miraculous and applied to ethical behavior is as impossible for a child as Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Children are imaginative. The world is very wonderful. Anything may happen any day. Any common road may lead to an enchanted palace where a princess has lain asleep a thousand years. Nothing is so natural as the supernatural. . . . The marvelous naturally appeals to children and does not for a long time awaken any question. . . . Out of this stage of intellectual progress they come by slow and normal processes into some understanding of the regularity of the universe. There is no gain in hastening this change or in explaining difficulties before they actually arise."

One must be prepared, however, to find some children of kindergarten age and others a little older, interested in making distinctions between the actual and the imaginative. It was a five-year-old who, on being read the story of the Garden of Eden without comment, said, "Mummy, I think that story is kind of a *fairy* story." Hugh Hartsorne in "Childhood and Character," cites the case of a boy four and a half years of age; "He seems to be very clear about the difference between the real and the imaginative. This morning he asked me if God was real or a fairy. . . . He often asks about the habits of animals whether it is real or a story. . . . He often says 'That is not really true, it is only a story, Mother,' with a questioning look." It goes without saying that as soon as children do honestly want to know, they should be honestly answered, but with most children under six or eight, the problem for teachers and parents is not to reduce the wonder element, nor to explain it, but to make it serve

its purpose in bringing vividly to the child the spiritual truths which he is able to make his own. In the first place, the stories must be selected with care. Such a miracle story as that of Elisha sending bears to eat the saucy children would unquestionably be rejected because of its revengeful spirit and its over-cruel punishment, while one like that of Elijah's sacrifice on Mt. Carmel would be rejected because the truth which it expresses would not relate itself to the interests or needs of young children. As a matter of fact, there are not a great many Old Testament stories (whether miracle stories or other types) that furnish the best possible medium for conveying to the youngest children the religious and ethical truths we wish them to gain. There are plenty of stories that can be so told as to interest children, but as for training in the Christian religion through them—that is another matter. The protest that many make against using other material than Bible stories brings us squarely up against the question of our controlling aim in religious education. If it be instruction in the Bible, then the sooner the Bible stories can be learned, the better and we shall test our work by asking how many Bible stories are known and how accurately they can be repeated. But if our aim is the religious development of the child, his steady growth in Christian character and spirit, then our use of the Bible is only a means toward that end and all our energies should be directed toward using it wisely. Then in the case of the younger children, whose experience is not wide enough to enable them rightly to interpret many of the Bible stories and who need stories of child life, nature stories and New Testament stories which will give them truths about the Christian God in a form that will prove far more effective, we shall not hesitate to reserve many Old Testament stories for later study. Whatever

material anywhere in the world will best serve our purpose at a given time is the material we want. Especially is it true that stories must be very carefully selected to be used in the Church School, where the attention of a group is to be centered on a story which ought to meet the character needs of the whole group as far as possible. It is different where a mother is telling or reading Bible tales to her own children and can choose in accord with their special interests.

There are, of course, a few Old Testament miracle stories that are admirably adapted for younger children. For example, such stories as those of Elijah (and Elisha) healing the boy who was so dear to his mother and Elisha curing Naaman through the helpfulness of the little captive maid, have adequate moral content for this age. The problem for the teacher here is to tell them so as to leave the spiritual values uppermost in the child's mind rather than the external facts.<sup>2</sup> For example, in the Elijah and Elisha stories referred to, the thought of the loving kindness which prompted the deeds and the gratitude shown to the mother, who had first helped in another way, should stand out rather than the marvel of the miracle. This is unusually well done in the story "Elisha and a Boy" in the Pilgrim Graded Lessons for Beginners, by Miss Frances W. Danielson. She begins, "There was once a man who was away from home most of the time. His name was Elisha. Elisha was a special friend of God. The reason Elisha could not stay at home was because he

<sup>2</sup> In order to accomplish this, it is generally better to tell a story than to read it, for one can make the truth, which to grown folks is perfectly conveyed in a brief word or phrase, more vivid and real to a child by omitting some details, adding others, and expressing the whole in a vocabulary intelligible to him. Some of the Bible words can be used also, for the sake of gaining familiarity with the well-known phrases.

traveled about from one place to another helping people. . . . Often in the morning Elisha did not know where he should sleep that night. When he ate breakfast he did not know where he should eat supper. Elisha cared more about helping people than about eating and sleeping. He was always ready to go where anybody needed him. No matter how tired he was, he would start the moment he knew anybody was in trouble. Elisha did many things to help people. Sometimes he made sick people well. Once the water of a city was so bad the people who drank it were sick. Elisha made it pure and good to drink. Elisha cared more about helping than about anything else." After the incident of the woman of Shunem and her son, the story ends, "How glad Elisha must have felt because God let him help this rich woman who had been so kind to him."

Little or no explanation of the miracle element will probably be necessary with children of this age. As always in dealing with young children, one who does not himself believe that the miracle stories are literally true, can save himself from any uneasiness of mind in telling them, can give the listeners the right idea and yet at the same time give the wonder element its full power over children by the simple device of calling these narratives *stories*—favorite old stories, "Wonder-stories" if you will, for children are familiar with this designation in kindergarten and school.

The older boys and girls, who are learning more, thinking and questioning more, force the teacher to consider how he may meet their different needs. It requires effort, but it is an effort that will gladly be made if it is understood that *lack of explanation often means lack of interest*. Many an experienced teacher recognizes that "If we tell our young people that the age of miracle was once a



reality, but is now past, they are only too likely to think that if miracles belong to a past age and a distant land, so also does the religion with which they are associated, and neither the miracles nor the God they reveal have much relation to present needs. 'It all happened so long ago,' sighed a village girl in her teens, at the close of a somewhat remote Bible lesson. As the 'miraculous' Bible stories are usually presented to our young people, the conclusion to which the thoughtful are driven is that either the miracles are incredible or else that they are irrelevant and uninteresting. This we believe to be the feeling of hundreds and thousands of adults and children today and it is known to every teacher, unless he deliberately works to repress thought or never succeeds in arousing any thought at all." A teacher of fourteen-year-old girls reports, "I found many of them eager for natural explanations of miracle stories. Their questions often anticipated explanations. . . . The pupils had no difficulties in their intellectual grasp of the interpretations given. They seemed to me to grasp the spiritual significance of the stories just as well as other pupils whom I have seen interpret the stories literally. It has been my observation that literal interpretation of miraculous stories puts an end to intellectual effort and puts the experience upon a plane unattainable by the people of today." One more quotation from a "Pilgrim Teacher" of some years ago: "If you ask why a boy is not interested in his Bible, I would pass on a story I have read for an answer: 'Whew,' said the boy—it was Bible-lesson time for Sunday afternoon, and his mother had just read the story of David and Goliath—'You can't work us up on none of them Bible heroes. I tell you it isn't fair! Why, David lived right in the days of miracles. I wouldn't be afraid to trot out and thump a giant if I knew God was going to do the killing for

me all right, all right.' He eyed his mother with a sarcastic grin. The dear lady laughed outright. 'Now Ray,' she quizzed, 'You've no idea how funny you are when you are as wrong as that! David didn't live in miraculous times at all. God didn't do miracles for him any more than for you and me. Read your Bible and see if God ever did. He didn't. David was just a good stout shepherd lad, who'd trained up his muscles fighting lynxes and bears, killing them with his own hand or with a sling. David had a hard job to do. He knew it was a hard job, but he also knew that, trusting in the Almighty's love, he could do it—and he rounded up his job in good shape. That last is your own pet slang. Now, Ray, when next you have a giant to kill, go read of David and remember that you have all the help he had—then go out and slay the giant.' ”

Yet in very few of the Sunday School lessons for boys and girls of this Junior and Intermediate age is any explanation offered at all. In one lesson planned for eleven year olds, Elijah smites the waters of the Jordan so that they part, Elisha sees a chariot of fire, Elijah is taken to heaven by a whirlwind, Elisha makes bitter waters sweet, yet it is not even suggested that any other interpretation than the literal is possible. Hundreds of college students state that they have been puzzled over the miracle stories for years, but it is rare to find more than two or three percent who have had any explanations offered them. "All things are possible with God," is as inadequate as no explanation. The story is told of a child, who, thinking of the steep roof of his own house, asked how St. Peter could have a vision and go to sleep on a roof and not fall off. The teacher, equally ignorant of flat Oriental roofs, but sure of the theory that would cover all such cases, responded, "My child, all things

are possible with God." No one doubts the power of God. The pertinent question is, "All things are possible, but what things are probable?"

What alternative explanations can we offer, so that the child may have before him another way than the literal of interpreting these stories? If several miracle stories are to be studied, it may be well to give a brief explanation of early ways of thinking that will serve as a sort of general introduction and that will forestall the necessity of spending much time with the miraculous element in each separate story. Almost any child over eight can understand that early peoples had conceptions of the world of nature which fuller knowledge has enabled us to correct and that men were then ignorant that God had established regular ways for nature which he himself always respected. They thought and we think that "God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform," but they thought he worked now in one way, now in another, and that there was no use in trying to find out how. They were amazed and took all the wonderful signs of his presence and care as "miracles," things he had never done before in that way and probably never would again. We think there is some use in trying to find out how he works. After watching the world for more centuries and with better tools than they had, we see that he does work in the same ways and find that we can learn a good deal about them. We can "think his thoughts after him," as Kepler, the great astronomer, said in a prayer of thanksgiving after he had learned a law of the heavenly bodies. We see the same signs of his presence and care that men long ago saw, but we do not call them miracles any longer, though our laws of nature are just as wonderful to us as their world of surprises was to them. Some account should also be given to boys and girls of the long period

of oral transmission before many of these stories were written with the almost inevitable effect of increasing the miraculous element. (See Chap. IV.)

For all these reasons, it can be explained, it is difficult for us now to be sure what really happened. In some cases we think we can tell, but in others it is almost impossible, and people make different conjectures. Sometimes it is well to give the class different theories as to what might have happened which gave rise to such stories as the plagues in Egypt, the manna in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan, the sacrifice on Mt. Carmel. But it is futile to try to account for all the stories or all the details. Very often the point that is particularly puzzling may be due to the growth of the wonder element in the telling of the tale, and we cannot always be sure whether we are dealing with fact or tradition.

It should be made very emphatic that the important thing for us is not to find out just what did happen, but to notice how sure the Hebrews were of God's care for them and to notice what kind of men these men were of whom the miracle stories were told. That we can find out and that is what we really care to know. Even when explanations are offered, they should always be held of subordinate importance and attention should be directed to the character values of the story so that they constitute the final impression. For example, in dealing with the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness, what is important is Moses' great interest in the welfare of his people, his persistence in the face of difficulties and the way he took advantage of every help that was offered him; also the fact that God does help those who are ready to endure privations and venture for a good cause. With Elijah on Carmel, the significant thing is not how the sacrifice came to burn, but the independence of Elijah in thinking

for himself, his courage in daring to stand alone for what he thought was right, even when opposed by the most powerful people in the land and his sure faith that God was with him and would support him.

It must be remembered that in this boy and girl period, whatever explanations are given may be very simple and brief—just enough to put the child on the right track, as it were. The interest is in characters and in concrete ethical issues and no lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of any abstract question should be attempted before middle or later adolescence. (If an unusually alert or thoughtful child brings up a question for which the rest of the class are not ready, it is always possible to greet the question cordially, to recognize it as an interesting problem—but one to be deferred for the present; then the subject can be taken up with that particular individual outside of the class hour.) Dean Hodges, in his books for children, knows well how to throw in very simple explanations, in the most casual way, as a part of the story itself—not drawing attention to any “miracle problem,” and yet opening the way to another interpretation than the literal one. This is often excellent for children of eight or nine years of age. For example, the natural Egyptian background of the plague stories is suggested in this way:<sup>3</sup> Moses said, “‘If you will not let the people go, God will make this river red like blood.’ And so it was. But when it cleared again Pharaoh said, ‘I have seen it like that many a time after the spring rains.’” So with the frogs: “‘Almost every year we have a plague of frogs,’” says Pharaoh. In telling of the capture of Jericho, Dean Hodges ends with the walls falling and says, “Indeed the walls were already falling that day when the spies climbed down on Rahab’s rope, for the

\*“Garden of Eden.”

true walls of a city are the stout hearts of its citizens and these had failed for fear." Thus he suggests very simply the well known fact that there was never a very strong or virile group in Jericho, perhaps partly on account of the enervating climate in the Jordan valley. The city was always taken easily by its foes. Of the Elijah miracle at Mt. Carmel he says, "Then the fire of the Lord fell. There was a flash as of lightning out of the clear sky." . . . This was told to Jezebel. "As for the fire from heaven, that she said was only an accidental stroke of lightning and as for the rain, it would have rained anyway. Jezebel believed in Baal still and declared that the fire and the rain proved nothing."<sup>4</sup>

One can best teach the Jonah and Daniel tales by presenting them as stories told for a purpose, and by making clear that the situation at the time when they were written supplies the reason why they were told. In teaching Jonah it should be made plain that other peoples had conquered, oppressed and exiled the Jews, so that the Jews, after they had regained some little prosperity in their own land, cherished a grudge against these people, could see no good in them, and longed to have them punished. "Some few Jews, however, saw how mean and narrow that was, understood that the Gentiles were capable of becoming better people, dared to believe that God loved them, and wanted his own people to be generous and helpful to them. One of these broader minded men wondered how to make others see that this was true. Which do you like better, sermons or stories? Stories, I'll venture! So did people then, and this man said to himself, 'I'll tell them a story and make it interesting enough so that they will listen to it and see if I can't show them in that way how different their spirit toward the Gentiles is from

<sup>4</sup> "Castle of Zion."

God's.' Who else used to tell stories to people in order to make them better? This man didn't know of Jesus, of course, but he had the same idea that Jesus had—that a story was a good way to teach a truth. And just as it doesn't make any difference to us whether the Good Samaritan ever lived or not, so we don't care whether there ever lived a man Jonah who preached to the heathen or not. Not the story but the truth told by the story is the important thing."

So in dealing with the Daniel stories, it is well to tell first some of the stirring history of the Maccabean period, which can be made to rouse keen interest in boys and girls of ten to fourteen years. One may show the way in which the Greeks tried to make the Jews give up their religion, and the terrible persecutions which the loyal ones had to endure. Show how brave some of the people were and how persistent in keeping the laws, but that others were not so strong and gave in to the Greeks. The stronger ones told stories to help the weaker ones to be brave and these are some of the stories. In most Sunday School lessons this connection is not made at all. Daniel is presented as an historical individual, living at the time of the Babylonian Exile, though the unhistorical character of the tales and their composition to meet the needs of men of the Maccabean period is clear to every Old Testament scholar.

With young people who are sufficiently mature further discussion of the miracle problem might be useful. One can trace something of the history of belief in miracle, noting that through the seventeenth century there was general belief not only in Biblical, but in contemporary miracles as well. No saint was canonized who had not worked miracles. Then gradually men came to doubt whether any miracles were being worked in their own

day and they began to push the age of genuine miracles back, first to the period of the church fathers and then to Bible times. The next step was to question even the miracles of the Bible and doubt of them has been steadily growing since. One can frankly recognize that far fewer people now than a generation ago, accept the miracle stories literally and then attempt to explain this tendency in thought. Naturally the gradual bringing of one realm after another under the control of law has been one of the chief reasons for questioning miracles. To the scientist, even though he hesitates to say "impossible," it seems highly improbable that the laws of nature did not hold in the past as in the present, and he would have to have far more ground than these stories furnish him for questioning that judgment. The modern historian has also something to contribute. His careful investigation of the length of time that elapsed between the events recorded and the period when they were written down, his comparison of earlier with later accounts, his inquiry as to what sources were available, their character and reliability, the method and purpose of the writer, all go to establish the fact that the nearer we get to a record made at the time the events occurred, the slighter is the miracle element. When one compares early with later accounts (whether in the Bible or in the lives of the saints), one often finds that a luxuriant growth of miracles has taken place in the interval. The conclusion is forced upon us that historically, the evidence for miracles is weak.

The question may then be frankly faced, does this growing doubt of miracles spell loss to religion? If it continues so that fewer and fewer people accept miracles in the old sense, will fewer and fewer people have a vital religion? It is well to ask just what the belief in Biblical miracles has contributed to religion; wherein lies their



especial worth? They have been thought to bring to men evidence of the existence of God and of his interest in men. This was natural at a time when the prevailing conception of God was of a God at a distance from the world, a God who created the world and set it going, as it were, then left it and reigned in heaven. Every once in a while (in Bible times) he proved unmistakably that he was still there and still interested in men by setting aside the orderly processes of nature and doing (or allowing his representatives to do) something special that could not be explained by man's activity or by natural law, something which said in tones of authority, "God is." Are those who "explain away" these miracle stories going to be left without equally certain evidence to them that God is? Some attempt will have to be made to express in simple terms the newer way of thinking of God's relation to the world; the conception that has been called the characteristic twentieth century conception of God, that namely of an immanent deity, revealed in and present in all that is. When the whole universe is pulsing with his life, when there is no natural law that does not reveal his mind continually, when "closer is he than breathing, nearer than hands or feet," there is no need of or place for a special "Manifestation" of him. "Is all God or occasional God the nobler theory?" asks one who finds in this way of thinking a support for faith more secure than that which miracles could furnish and a conception of God richer and more intimate than that of the "detached" God of the deists. Such a thinker cannot regret the change and cannot take very seriously the fears that such views are "destructive." In other words, the newer way of thinking about God has done two things—has helped in its turn to cast doubt on the miracle stories and has at the same time

driven them from the commanding position which they formerly occupied in religion.

This is not to maintain that there is complete agreement among religious thinkers of the liberal group as to the way of God with the world and his relations to persons. Philosophy as well as science has still far to go and no final word can yet be spoken. Differences in ways of thinking are evident if we take, for example, such an event as the crossing of the Red Sea, using the older source, which makes it possible to suppose that the safe passage was due to the action of the strong wind blowing all night on shallow waters, which counteracted the force of the current and created a fording place. There are those who claim that if we interpret it thus we see the hand of God as directly as if we suppose that he violated the laws governing the actions of air and water. The fact that the wind blew just in the time of need shows providential oversight, shows God directly and immediately in control of the laws of nature for the benefit of men. As we may turn the water on to a parched garden, making that happen which would not naturally have happened (through use, not violation, of laws of nature), so God may, when he sees best, exercise the privilege of similar interventions by the use of laws known to him. This providential guidance is evident in the case of individuals as well as of groups.

to his laws if he must just let them work and that, if he could operate the system with the special needs of individuals in mind but does not do it, he is not in as close personal relationship to men as we have supposed that he is.

The interpretation just given satisfies the demand of many for an explanation of the story that is in accord with modern thought and yet is distinctly religious; many teachers like to encourage their pupils to rest in the assurance that it is really just as wonderful to think God made the wind blow at that particular time as to think that he made the waters pile up like a wall at Moses' command.<sup>5</sup>

Suppose, however, some one in the class were stoutly to assert that he believes the wind would have blown in just the same way whether the children of Israel had been at the shore or not—that if God does personally direct the forces of nature, we would have to hold him responsible for the earthquake that occurred in the most thickly populated part of Japan, as well as for more propitious happenings—that there would soon be no system left on which we could rely at all if God were going to bend it now in this way, now in that, to accord with the needs or prayers of individuals, that in bringing success to one man, the same act would spell disaster for another. Is there any possibility of making clear to such an individual that one can interpret the deliverance at the crossing of the Red Sea religiously even if one believe that, "The

<sup>5</sup> It is evident that this group is trying to avoid the danger to which they feel religion is exposed in giving up the conception of miracle, the danger of falling back more and more on belief in the control of everything by law, which seems to them an impersonal and mechanistic conception. If they could think of law, however, as only the servant of spirit, steadily used by the Great Spirit for spiritual purposes, their confidence would be unimpaired that personality is the supreme thing in the universe.

wind would have blown just the same"?—that there is a way of thinking of God's dealings with men which brings him very near to them, which keeps personality supreme and yet does not necessitate any immediate supervision of the forces of nature?

I think there is and it is worth suggesting, for it will meet the needs of a few as no other theory will. Given to them simply as one possible way of thinking which is held by a good many religious and thoughtful people, it need not disturb those others who find the "providential guidance" theory rationally and emotionally satisfying. The idea is in essence something like this: the regular ways of nature's working have been established by God so that in the long run they best serve his purposes for the spiritual development of mankind. This is the reason why he does not personally direct them in each particular instance, not because he could not if he wished. But that does not relegate him to a distance, as it were, out of close and living touch with men. His knowledge of men's needs, his sympathy with men in their sorrows, his sustaining love and his aid in all spiritual ways are not less reliable because the apparatus used to express them is sure and constant in its operation. The prime necessity is to realize that the life of the spirit is the really significant thing; the great essential is that the spiritual life of man be developed, not that the physical life of man be guarded from injury or even from death. God trusts men to utilize what comes of weal or woe, good fortune or ill fortune for the purposes of the spirit; even if they face imminent or sure death to face it with trust in the God whose love holds through all. This is the spirit which breathes through Paul's, "I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be

filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Rupert Brooke sounds the same note:

Safe when all safety's lost,  
Safe where men fall,  
And if these poor limbs die,  
Safest of all.

That was perhaps the real reason for Jesus' lack of fear in the storm on the Sea of Galilee—not that he knew he could control the waves, but he knew that one who was very close to God should be ashamed of terror whatever happened.

To return to the crossing of the Red Sea. Perhaps the really significant thing to us who look back at it, is not that the wind blew favorably for the group in flight, but that there was a man present among them with a spirit responsive enough to God's spirit to have understood his purposes and to have dared to make the venture which brought the people of Israel to the Red Sea. The lack of favorable winds would have been no indication that God was not concerned with the people's welfare. Our deepest trust is that the world is so arranged that God's purposes for our good cannot be thwarted so long as we loyally coöperate with him and develop the possibilities that lie in all of us who are made in God's image.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOME LITERARY PROBLEMS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

HISTORICAL study of the Old Testament has brought out a great many facts concerning authorship, unity and date of these documents. In the main, all of them are fairly well established but they are quite different from the traditional views. What particular difficulties are presented to the teacher?

(1) There is much material not written by the historical individual to whom it is ascribed; for example, the Pentateuch and many of the Psalms. Is it important that children be rightly informed on these points? Should the statements in the Bible as to authorship be corrected or ignored? (2) The material in many books is not a literary unit, but is composed of writings from different men and different ages, so that we find contradictions and duplicate accounts of the same incident, differing in details. (3) Much material was not merely written long after the events occurred but is colored by the special theology of the author, so that it presents the religion of a later day rather than the history of an earlier. Does this need to be explained to the child or can we leave all that for the mature study of those who prove to have scholarly interests?

In dealing with young children it is best to select what is of most value for them, usually from the earlier sources (because they are not only more correct but more clearly

and simply told) with no explanations about author, composition or date. Care should of course be taken not to emphasize a wrong impression, as that "Moses told us we must obey our parents" or that "David said, The Lord is my shepherd." Even the older children, it is safe to say, will not be much interested in the question of authorship. The stories are what the child cares for. It may be well to tell him that the caption above each book in the Pentateuch, "a book of Moses" did not appear there until Moses had been dead several centuries and was then added because it had grown to be the custom to credit all laws to this great law-giver and these books were full of laws. It will not make much difference to the child one way or the other and in all probability he will promptly forget it.

Perhaps the only point where the Mosaic authorship really makes a distinct impression upon the child mind is in the giving of the Ten Commandments. Most Sunday-school lessons and Bible Story Books give this account just as it stands in the Bible. The idea is apparently that the question of authorship can be left for investigation until adult years. It is true that one need not try to give a child the positions taken by scholars with respect to every fragment of the Bible that he studies. The right general point of view concerning the Bible is the main thing and the fully correct details can come later and will then fit into place. On the other hand, many a college student working at the problem (and learning that modern scholars do not ascribe the laws, in their present form at least, to Moses, while many question their Mosaic origin in any form) has said, "Why of course the Ten Commandments are great no matter if Moses did not write them. It would be all right, if only you just hadn't thought he did all your life." But that

"having thought he did" gets in the way. Others are genuinely perturbed and feel that it is difficult to believe the laws are from God if they are not from God through Moses. Many find adjustment to this change one of the most difficult required of them by the newer theories. They seem to feel that there is a certainty about the coming of the Ten Commandments from God if he gave them complete and perfect into the hands (or some are willing to say into the mind) of Moses. If the Hebrew people, however, through many years of trial and error, of observation of life and reflection about it, of effort to attune their wills to the mind of God as successive generations understood him, worked these principles out so that these laws indicate a group conscience, standards that gradually developed, then they are no revelation from God. "Why," one said, "Congress makes laws—and look at them! Could they be called a divine revelation?" *Vox Moses* may be *vox Dei* but *vox populi* is not!

How can one correct such misapprehension, or better yet give a truer conception to start with? Is the truer conception one that can be made intelligible and profitable to children? Even ten-year olds can answer the question whether they would be any more eager to honor their fathers and mothers if they could say to themselves with certainty, "Moses told me to," or whether they want to do everything they can for their fathers and mothers because they love them and know it is right to help them. That gives them the right conception of the intrinsic merit of good laws without using any unfamiliar terms. They can understand too that Jesus told us to judge a tree by its fruits, not by its roots and that the question of who was the author of a law is only a root. With some groups one can go farther and point out in other laws ascribed to Moses many evidences of low standards, of absurdities (in



the light of the Gospels), of trivialities exalted to a place as high as that given to great principles. (Ex. 21: 23-25; 22: 16, 18; Lev. 11: 6, 21: 17; Dt. 23: 3.) We would not want to take as our test of what really comes from God, the words which preface the Hebrew laws, "Jehovah spake unto Moses saying. . . ." We have other tests, the tests of the fruit of the tree, namely, the appeal of the laws to our highest selves and the evidence of a law's workability through the centuries in all sorts of circumstances. We believe that the group conscience which disapproves unworthy laws, represents the voice of God more truly than does the maker of the laws disapproved. Attention can be drawn, also, to the dependence of God for the working out of his purposes on the rank and file of men, as well as on the exceptional individuals whose names we revere. How helpless a leader is without a following, without support! Many a movement of emancipation and progress for mankind has had no one single outstanding exponent, but multitudes of men greater and lesser who have done their part, as in the Renaissance, the movement for democracy in France, and the present social movement in religion. Something of this ought to be brought home to children, so that they may not remain ignorant that even in the laws made by no one leader, but by the Hebrew people, yes even in some of the laws "made by congress," the truth and wisdom of God makes itself known.

There is still the question of how to explain the statement in the Bible that the laws as they now stand were given to Moses. Most children of ten or over can understand that the making of law with us today is a gradual process; that as men become more civilized more laws must always be made. For instance the invention of the aeroplane and submarine has necessitated statutes that

would have meant nothing a century ago. Just so, as men's consciences develop and they understand more about how they should treat one another, they must have better laws to express those higher standards, such as the amendment to the constitution which we are now trying to have passed prohibiting child labor. This was true of Hebrew life also, but the custom established itself among them of giving the name of Moses, their first great law-giver, to the whole body of laws that was steadily accumulating. The children can look up the story of David making a decision about how to divide the booty taken in war, a decision which became a law (I Sam. 30: 21-25ff), and then find the same law ascribed according to custom to Moses (Num. 31: 25ff). In later years they represented the Ten Commandments, which by common consent were accepted as their best laws, as given to Moses in a specially dramatic way. In their present form, at least, these laws reflect higher standards than the Hebrews could have reached at that early period and express the finest conceptions attained several centuries afterwards. This should be stated only incidentally as a matter of interest but not of very great importance. Stress should be laid on the fine teachings of the code, its worth to men through the centuries since, and its usefulness today.

Is there any possibility that the character of Moses will cease to be an impressive one if his connection with the Ten Commandments is severed? If the study of Moses brings out as it should, his varied and remarkable qualities of leadership, and note is made of his wise decisions in many matters which probably formed the basis for later laws, children can easily see that as the Ten Commandments do not need Moses to make them great, neither does he need them to make him great, and neither one will suffer by the separation.

As always, the wisdom of such discussion depends on the quality of the class. In some groups who find it difficult not to lie and thief, it might be foolish to spend time telling about even the mountain and tablets. The time might better be spent discussing the meaning of some of these laws to boys and girls on the streets and in school, putting in a positive form what is there so largely negative, translating the King James English into the vernacular of today, discussing motives that appeal more than "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," and (with older pupils) inquiring how far the code as a whole would carry one towards the Christian goal as described by Jesus of Nazareth. Even if there is no such attempt as suggested here to separate the laws from Moses it would seem the part of wisdom to emphasize the worth of the laws more than their setting, so that what lingers in the mind will not be the mountain nor the tablets nor Moses, but the importance of living a life which takes reverent account of God and of the rights of other people.

Other problems of authorship are more easily handled. In studying David one finds plenty of biographical material for use in making him a living figure to the child. There is no advantage to be gained from connecting his name with the Psalms, of which we are told that though some may be very early, there is no one that can with any confidence be assigned to David. The Twenty-third Psalm and others may be learned as "memory gems" or for use in devotional services. If any interest is shown in their authorship it can be explained that all of the Psalms come from great groups of unnamed seekers after God who gave their contributions without receiving any personal honor for their work—contented if they might praise God without receiving praise from men for doing

so. "The Shepherd Psalm" can be related to the shepherd life without the need of association with any particular shepherd. If the ascriptions in the Bible of certain psalms to David are brought up for discussion, the explanation can be given that the Hebrews honored David as "the sweet singer of Israel" in much the same way as they did Moses as their foremost law-giver and attached David's name to many of their best hymns. The actual authors of these hymns had been forgotten if ever known. Often it doesn't occur to us today to notice the authors of the hymns we sing. Who wrote "Onward Christian Soldiers"? "The Son of God Goes Forth to War"? Most of us do not know. So it was with the Hebrews. Many psalms are left with no name attached, while some are ascribed to others than David so that the Psalter is really like a hymn book containing hymns from many men and many ages.

The problem is simple if the teaching throughout has been done on this basis, for this point of view offers no more difficulties to children than the traditional one and is accepted as naturally. Very often, however, a teacher finds that nothing very positive of any sort lingers from earlier instruction, even if it has been different, because pupils are not really concerned about authorship anyway. One experienced teacher of girls in a private school of the first rank writes, "Most of the girls whom I teach have had very casual religious training at home. They were not brought up to hold the literal or any other interpretation of the Bible as sacred. Nothing shocks them. They are, however, very eager to find something which will help them with their own problems, of which for the most part they are very conscious. *If they can find light on them in the Bible, they do not seem to care who wrote it.* It does not upset them in the least to know that

all the Psalms were not written by David. My experience is that the present generation concerns itself very little with these factors."

Of course with older pupils in any study of the great personalities among the prophets or of the development of religious thought through the centuries, it makes a great deal of difference "who wrote it." When one comes to such a prophecy as that in Isaiah, chapters 40 to 55, it is important not to connect it with the Isaiah of the eighth century whose stirring message can be understood only in the light of a knowledge of his time. The historic background is equally required in the case of the prophecy often called Second Isaiah. Here a very different message is given which stands out in the fullness of its beauty and power when studied by itself with its own background as it never could when its identity was confused with the writings of the prophet whose name has been given to the whole great collection in the book of Isaiah.

The second difficulty, i.e., that so many books are not literary units and that there are duplicate accounts of the same event, is a similar one and presents no great obstacles. Slight differences in accounts can be explained to children as Dean Hodges does in his "Child's Guide to the Bible." "Imagine a tribe of people emigrating into a new country. Some are before and some behind. Then something happens; those who are before push on over a range of hills and suddenly there is a heavy storm of snow and those who are behind stay back. They go into winter quarters, with the high hills between them. In the spring they like the country and settle where they are, separated by the mountains. Now these separate nations have at first the same traditions and memories; they remember the same ancestors and heroes and history; they have the same accounts of the past. But year after

year as they live apart, little differences will arise in these accounts. Sometimes names will be changed, sometimes numbers will be less here and greater there, for this is human nature. No two persons will tell the same story in just the same way. Then suppose that after a long time, the two nations become one again. Suppose that one nation is driven by enemies over the hills and joins the other nation. And suppose that somebody writes a history of the old days when the two nations were one before and of the ancestors and heroes which they have in common. He will find two forms of stories. Sometimes he may combine the two, sometimes he may keep them both with all their differences. In a way this is what happens to the accounts of the ancient world which appear at the beginning of the Bible, except that the event which separated the Hebrews into two nations was not a snow storm but a war. They fought together and then lived apart. Thus they told the old stories in gradually differing ways, in one form in the south, in the nation of Judah; in another form in the north in the nation of Israel. Long afterwards the two forms were set down side by side in the book of Genesis and in other books of Bible History." Children can further be told concerning the process of combining two or more accounts into one, that some books in the Bible were made not just with pen and ink but with scissors and paste. One little scrap from one book and another from another were put in side by side, without any sign that there was a change of authors or date. Into the book this story would go, perhaps just continuing the last sentence and making a pretty good connection, but it may have been written by a different person hundreds of years after what came just before in the scrap-book. So now it requires careful work to separate them again.

As soon as children are old enough to grasp it (shall

we say at nine or ten?), they may be given some such general explanation. It is questionable whether there is any gain until they are more mature in pointing out the different strands of narrative combined in a particular story. Many who fear that confusion would result if two versions of a story were told, prefer to select the version with more worth, usually the older, simpler one, and tell that, trusting in this way to make the first impression a clear and correct one.

This surely would be wise in such instances as the crossing of the Red Sea, where the older account represents Jehovah using natural means to help the Hebrews as he "caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night and made the sea dry land" (Ex. 14: 21, second part of verse), while the later accounts make it a miraculous change as "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the waters were divided" (Ex. 14: 21, first and third parts of verse).<sup>1</sup> However, when the time comes for study of miracles with the older children, the two accounts of this particular story may well be differentiated, for they provide a splendid opportunity to show how the miraculous element grew with the passing of the years, the oldest story giving us nothing that has not been paralleled in other instances (strange though it is) and the later accounts recording a most amazing miracle.

In the case of the four accounts of the wilderness wanderings now combined in one, it is far wiser to tell stories selected from only the two earlier sources so that the children get a clear impression of the primitive life of

<sup>1</sup> The accounts have been so closely blended that instead of trying to separate them throughout for one's self it is wiser to use a book that makes a division like C. F. Kent's, *Beginnings of Hebrew History*, p. 73.

the time, with the little "tent of meeting" with Jehovah pitched away from all the tents where the people lived (Ex. 33: 7). This is much better than to give them the wrong impression from the late priestly account of a costly tabernacle established in the center of the tribes where the elaborate sacrificial ceremonies of a later day were carried on. (Nu. 2, 3 and many chapters in description of the tabernacle.) There is little reason in dealing with children under twelve for informing them that there is such a late account or why it was written. Let them benefit by the teacher's use of the results of the scholar's work without themselves going over the processes.

This is true of much of the material which reflects religious theories of a later day more clearly than the history or religion of the days which are being described. For example, in the book of Judges the early stories should be used with the editor's contributions omitted. In the study of the United and Divided kingdoms it is wiser to use the books of Samuel and Kings rather than Chronicles, though even then we must discriminate between early and late sources. The early account of the anointing of Saul as king by Samuel should be given rather than the late story of the people's unreasonable demand for a king and Samuel's disapproval and reluctant yielding. In Kings it is better not to use the later editor's condemnation of the kings of the north but merely the separate stories of kings and prophets. In Ezra and Nehemiah, the Nehemiah memoirs give the early reliable material. There is no need of expecting the children to distinguish between early and late. The teacher should do that work for them.

It is surprising to note how almost invariably when there are two accounts, the legacy that college students



have left from their Sunday School days is a distinct impression of the later, historically less reliable account rather than the earlier. The two accounts were not studied separately, but in all the instances given above the later has been the one selected for them. Is this because the later often tells the "bigger story" or because the moralizing tendency of the later times seems to present a "lesson" more appropriate for Sunday School instruction than the simple and true facts of the earlier account?

However, there are some who think it wiser in dealing with a special story to inform the older children of the existence of different accounts. Mr. Rhondda Williams makes it clear how the different points of view can be made quite simple so that children of ten or over would have no trouble in distinguishing them. He says, "I suppose that usually when you think of Saul, the king of Israel, you think of a bad man. It is as well to know that there were different stories about Saul, written by different men. One writer did not approve of the monarchy and naturally his account of Saul, its king, is very unfavorable. But the oldest writer did approve of the monarchy and he gives a very different account of Saul and how he became king. . . . Now I'm going to tell you a few things about Saul which were told by the man who approved of the monarchy."<sup>2</sup>

Even if one did not think such distinctions necessary ordinarily, there are brief passages in familiar stories where the dove-tailing of the two accounts causes real confusion and it is good fun for boys and girls at the age when puzzles are delighted in, to take the accounts apart and see the difficulties clearing up. For example, there is the account of the disposing of Joseph by his older brothers (Gen. 37:18-36) where no special point of view

<sup>2</sup> *Old Testament Stories in Modern Light*, p. 98.

needs to be understood for either source. We have two stories both of which carry Joseph to Egypt in slightly different ways, each one clear by itself, but hopelessly muddled as thrown together.<sup>3</sup> Distinguishing the two accounts of the flood story is again a very simple matter and may make a class of older boys and girls keenly interested in what would otherwise be a "baby story." As they see the lengthy and repetitious single account dividing into two stories each clear and to the point, each consistent within itself but differing as to the number of animals included, the length of time it rained, etc., they come to understand better than a mere statement could make them, the scrap-book method of composition. More important, thenceforth they will have wherewith to answer criticisms of the Bible as a book full of contradictions and impossibilities. This kind of material can be presented so that they will gain respect both for the Bible writers each of whom told his tale simply as he knew it and also for those who, eager not to leave out a bit of such good stories, did their best to combine both accounts. A clever piece of work they did too, which could hardly be better done if one start with the determination to keep all that is good in the several separate accounts. The older students will be interested in this ancient way of writing history, a favorite with the Hebrews, and in comparing it with the method of our modern historians who would feel the necessity of deciding between varying accounts in favor of the more reliable if they could discern them. Not much time need be spent on such matters, but a little quickening of the intellectual interest in the Bible does no harm and possibly later on the pupils will respect the religious counsels of the teacher who "knew about all these things and wasn't 'phased' a bit by them."

<sup>3</sup> C. F. Kent, *Beginnings of Hebrew History*, pp. 128-129.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PRE-CHRISTIAN CONCEPTIONS OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

WE are eager to have children form certain Christian associations with the term God, so that from the start it may be the thought of the love and kindliness of the Heavenly Father which comes to them when the word is mentioned. The kind of God that Jesus knew is the kind of God, as far as children are capable of understanding him, whom we want them to become first acquainted with; the God who is far beyond any of us in goodness; who wants us to be good; is grieved when we are not; forgives us when we have done wrong and are sorry; and always, whether we are good or bad, loves us and takes care of us. As to what "being good" means, we want that stated in terms which are intelligible to children, so that they know that what God wants of us is the kind of thing our parents and teachers want of us, not anything peculiar or unrelated to life.

There are many parts of the Old Testament that do give this Christ-like view of God and this reasonable view of the demands God makes on men. But the trouble is that there are also many parts that reflect unchristian views of a God limited in his interests to the Hebrew people alone, fighting for them against their enemies; angry so that he has to be urged by men to be merciful; uncertain, so that he changes his mind and does otherwise

than he had first stated he would. He is sometimes represented as jealous, vindictive, and unforgiving; a god who could tempt men to do evil and then punish them for so doing; a God who tolerated and even required all sorts of things from men that we now think of as unreasonable, unnecessary or wrong; a God who could strike Uzzah dead for trying to support the ark when it was slipping (2 Sam. 6:7); who could seek to slay Moses when Moses had just started for Egypt to do God's will (Ex. 4:24). These conceptions often appear in the story element of the Old Testament that children love. The higher and nobler conceptions are found more frequently and more forcibly stated in the sermons of the prophets and in the book of Psalms. The sermons can be used for young children not at all and the psalms very little, except for a few memory verses, with the result that children often do not come in contact with the best of the Old Testament and get very mistaken conceptions from the parts of it that they do know. For the stories are often presented in Sunday School lessons and Bible Books as if everything the Hebrews tell us about God were true, as if all Bible religion were on the same level.

The only cases in which attention has been called to mistaken ideas is in the matter of polygamy and the Jewish ceremonial law. Many college students have a settled reverence for everything about God or duty in the Old Testament just because it is in the Bible. They do not discriminate or test by higher standards. They are trained to do nothing but accept and praise every part of the Bible. Anything else seems to them irreverent, "picking flaws," almost as if one were daring to criticize God. Some of them even have to be helped to distinguish between God and men's thoughts of God. It is amazing that they have been known to profess surprise that God

ever would do these unethical things; amazing that they had not learned long before that God never really was all that the early Hebrews thought him. It is evident that they have been taught to regard as "gospel truth" what is very far removed from the gospel, that a sort of halo has been thrown over every Old Testament story which has prevented them from seeing the story in its own natural light, from being honest with it. Yet for real development in character nothing can be more essential than that they shake themselves clear of the artificialities, the easy thoughtless conventionalities and the cloudiness of mind which usually accompanies such an attitude. They need to do some straight honest thinking which will lead them to give honor where honor is due, and to recognize outgrown, crude conceptions of God when they meet them. Although they have the best kind of example for such a use of the Old Testament in the methods of the Master himself, often they do not recognize this to be the case. Their failure to make distinctions is humorously evident in the frequency with which one finds them speaking of the Old Testament worthies as *Christians*; "Noah was a good Christian, so he was saved"!

The positive harm which results from the insistence on thinking of the religious conceptions of the Bible as all equal in worth is often seen in the mistaken practical conclusions which result. Doctor A. Herbert Gray in his talks with soldiers found perplexity often growing out of the assumption that all Old Testament religion is Christian religion. He says: "To Scotch soldiers the 91st Psalm is generally familiar, and there they read promises addressed to the man who trusts in God. 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee—There shall

no evil befall thee.' 'And there,' as a Tommy said to me in effect, 'was Bob, the best man in our platoon, a man who said his prayers night and morning, a real Christian if ever there was one, and he was held up in the German wire, and fair riddled with bullets.' To teach a man that God will be with him even in the hour of death, and that beyond death there is nothing for him to fear, is to give him a faith adequate to the terror of life at the front. But to leave him with the Old Testament belief in the material salvation of the godly man is simply to mislead him, and prepare for him real trouble. The faith we have offered men would seem not to have been a faith simply centered in Jesus, who warned them that in the world they would have tribulation, and that violent death might be their portion. It has been a faith oddly mixed with Jewish misconceptions—the very misconceptions from which Jesus set free all who would hear His word.

"Another instance of this fatal ignorance that both amazed and saddened me related to a most lovable officer who had grown up within the church, and who argued for a policy of vindictive retaliation towards the Germans by quoting the passage relating to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. He really believed he had Scriptural warrant for his suggestions, and thought that a chaplain who was present and who countered him on New Testament grounds was merely a clever and wily disputant. . . . It may be questioned whether anything has more hindered the final ascendancy of Jesus in the world for which He died than just the failure of the church more openly to repudiate all that is not Christian in the Old Testament. Men have allowed themselves to think about international affairs in the spirit of an ignorant and vindictive Hebrew of the early pre-Christian cen-

turies. And so the world has spurned the way into its peace."<sup>1</sup>

One can find evidences in the minds of children of similar confusion and perplexity. How could it be otherwise? They are more at the mercy of the theories handed over to them than mature men and women, for men and women have more perspective, and have had some opportunity to read and to hear other points of view. The Reverend Mr. Griggs-Smith says in his "Child's Knowledge of God": "There is evidence to show that the customary teaching from the book of Daniel when treated as representing a true historical record of actual occurrences, has done considerable harm. 'Teacher,' said a girl of nine with tears in her eyes, on entering school one morning in 1916, 'you told us yesterday that God took care of Daniel because he was a good man and prayed to him and this morning we have had a letter to say that my brother has been killed and I don't think he could have loved God and said his prayers for God has not taken care of him.'"

Many comments of children, however, show a less ready acceptance of what they are told, show a keenness and honesty in the child mind that often puts us older ones to shame. Miss Hetty Lee in "Present Day Problems in Religious Education" cites several illustrations of young children's remarks, either criticizing or apologizing for the God revealed in the Old Testament stories. "How cruel of God! was the exclamation of a child who mourned for the death of Pharaoh's horses. Others said, "He wouldn't have drowned people in the flood if he'd thought of it." "God has improved since then, hasn't he, mother?" "I love Jesus but I hate God."

Another writer tells of a child who on hearing an

<sup>1</sup> As *Tommy Sees Us*, pp. 59-61.

Old Testament story setting forth the wrath of God, asked, "Is that God dead yet?" Another says: "We can scarcely wonder at the London boy's definition of God as 'Im what drowned the world one day and is going to burn it up another.'" It is of course true that many of us who were told these old stories, were never conscious of any harmful effects. The impression made by a story will never be the same on all individuals. Some are far more thoughtful, sensitive and imaginative than others, but as Dr. Griggs-Smith has expressed it, "No one can guarantee that the effect will not be exceedingly harmful in any individual case. Some will not take the story seriously and it will mean little or nothing to them; it will only be something to be carried very lightly . . . but do we desire the Bible stories to be so treated?" The results are more serious than those produced by the often disturbing details in fairy stories for "God takes part in this one and little ones early learn to put great trust in God and seriously to regard what he does." And again "Although the details of the stories may not all vividly remain, these harmful elements in a child's conception of God do and when later in life they have to withstand a tax upon their faith these weak points prove the most vulnerable and they break down."<sup>2</sup>

An illustration of the difficulty of throwing off in later years a mistaken impression gained in childhood is given in the two following instances. In both one can see that Old rather than New Testament conceptions are uppermost. "A friend of the writer, was haunted until she was a woman grown by the terrible God she had pictured to herself as a child,—a gray old man with beard and bushy eyebrows, peering angrily at her from behind walls and around corners, watching to catch her in some trivial

<sup>2</sup> *The Child's Knowledge of God*, pp. 32-35.



sin. She was forever trying to placate him, saying, 'Now, God, if I do so and so, you will *not* be angry with me will you?' "3 H. G. Wells in 'God, The Invisible King' says: "He and his hell were the nightmare of my childhood. . . . I thought of him as a fantastic monster perpetually waiting to condemn and to strike me dead . . . He was over and about my silliness and forgetfulness as the sky and sea would be about the child drowning in the middle Atlantic."

What can we do to guard against the formation of such impressions and to bring the child the best of the Old Testament? Undoubtedly in teaching younger children it is essential that we omit many of the stories entirely. Before eight or nine years of age, they have no historical perspective and it would only confuse them if we tried to give them any understanding of the age out of which they arose, such as makes these old stories valuable to us, or of the change and growth in men's conceptions of God. Therefore one must select the stories with greatest care. Not a few think that no one of the stories in the first eleven chapters of Genesis is fitted for young children. Miss Lee tells of a four-year-old to whom the story of Adam and Eve was read who asked, "Why did God tell Adam and Eve not to eat that apple?" Then receiving no satisfactory answer, reflected, 'I expect he wanted it for himself,' the net result of the story on the child being to show the God of infinite love and perpetual self-giving as a god of selfishness and greed. In short, the story is not suitable for the young child."<sup>4</sup> Even the story of the baby Moses, generally admitted to be one of the few Old Testament stories that is surely good for little children to hear is not without its difficulties. I

<sup>3</sup> Helen Nicolay, *Peter and Paul*, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Present-day Problems in Religious Education*, p. 101.

have known children of five and three (after hearing the story read from one of the best books of Bible stories we possess) to be afraid to go into a room alone. "A king might be there!" "A bad king might get me!"

Some would think it very regrettable for children to learn only a few of the Old Testament stories in their early years. However, it is far more important that the right ideas of God be acquired than an early familiarity with all these Bible stories. The years from nine to twelve when some explanation can be given, offer plenty of opportunity to acquaint them with the best stories and what is learned then will be as safely stored away in memory as it would be if acquired sooner. Furthermore from nine to twelve is the time when children like the Old Testament best, according to statistics compiled by George E. Dawson.<sup>5</sup> Safeguards in telling these stories are necessary and possible at this age. We must frankly admit the mistaken conceptions to be found in much of the material. This can be done very simply at first. "You know how when you were little, you used to kick and scream if you could not have what you wanted? You weren't bad—you didn't know any better, but as you grew older you learned how to behave and now if you should do those things it would be very wrong. Just so not only boys and girls, but whole peoples have to grow to understand what they ought to do. There was a time when the Hebrew people did some things that are told about in the Old Testament because they didn't know better and it was not wrong for them then but it would be if we in America should do them now. They learned better ways as time went on as some of the last things written in the Old Testament make plain, while in the New Testament

<sup>5</sup> *The Child and His Religion.*

Jesus Christ tell us a great deal more still about the best way to live.

"The same thing is true of the ideas the Hebrews had of God. I once knew a little three-year-old girl who found it hard to be sure of the difference between God and Jack Frost. Now that she is older, she would laugh at herself if you told her that, for she has learned a great deal since about God. So the early Old Testament stories contain some childish and mistaken ideas of God and they seem very strange to us, who have all the truths about God that Jesus Christ brought us. Of course God always was just what Jesus Christ said he was. He never was the kind of God that people sometimes thought by mistake that he was, and all this time he was slowly correcting their mistakes and teaching people what he was truly like and we can see them learning in the Old Testament. God was very patient, for it took a long time even with the Hebrew people who learned more quickly than any other people did." After such a general introduction one must over and over again with special stories recall these facts by some such reminder as Rhondda Williams gives at the beginning of his stories of Gideon: "Three chapters in the Book of Judges are concerned with stories of an old hero called Gideon. They are interesting to us because they show what sort of men the Hebrews, at the time this book was written, looked upon as heroes. When we read about them we must be sure to remember that they are not the kind of heroes we want now. They had some good points which would still be useful, but they could by no possibility be called Christians, and in a Christian world they would be quite out of place. In the time of the Judges, life was very uncivilized, manners very rude, and the ways of men rough and revengeful. When you read, therefore, of things that the angel of the Lord said

to Gideon you must not take it as any message of the Lord for our life today, though we can learn some lessons from what Gideon did." <sup>6</sup>

By continually contrasting principles and practice in the Old Testament with principles and practice in the New Testament, children may learn to discriminate, to test Old Testament religion by the highest standards they have, to condemn conduct that is faulty and admire what is fine in any given story. Naturally, when the children are younger or less keen mentally, comparisons will have to be made for them by the teacher and the beauty or the untruth in the story pointed out. The older and alerter ones will profit more by the attempt to do such discriminating for themselves. If dealt with in this way, there are very few Old Testament stories that could not be made valuable studies. This method also has the advantage of helping the children to retain what they know of the New Testament by the frequent use of it. <sup>7</sup>

Many teachers of experience unite in asserting that such a method of handling the Old Testament works very successfully with children of all ages from the Junior Department on, that the children grasp the method, and enter into the discussions with zeal.

A few illustrations may be given of the points made above. Although the story of Abraham and Isaac is one frequently used with children, there is a good deal of evidence to show that it often leaves a very unfortunate

<sup>6</sup> *Old Testament Stories in Modern Light*, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> It is much wiser to study the Old Testament consecutively for a year or two, using the New Testament for comparison and contrast as suggested above, than to keep constantly shifting from the Old to the New Testament every few months as some Sunday School series do, because the makers of them did not want the children to breathe the Old Testament atmosphere too long a time. As one result, many children lose their historical bearings entirely.

impression. One difficult point is that a father should prepare to kill his boy and another that God should tell Abraham to do anything so horrible. Mrs. H. had been trying to teach her little girl not to be afraid in the dark because God watched over her. The child overheard the story of Abraham and Isaac being told to her older brother and said she didn't want a God like that watching over her crib, a God who would ask a father to burn his little boy. Dr. Griggs-Smith says: "There is abundant evidence to show that the effect of the story of the sacrifice of Isaac upon the more thoughtful children is the mental impression of a contemplated murder." It is interesting to note that one child asserted that he was sure Isaac's *mother* didn't know what Abraham was planning or she would never have allowed it. Even if one explains very carefully that God never meant that the plan should be carried out, that he knew all the time that he would provide the ram, the difficulty is still to be faced that the story *says* God told Abraham to do something that he didn't really mean him to do. If an older person venture to explain, "that was to test his faith," a child will not be satisfied. It is inconceivable to him that his father should tell him to go and strike his little sister or to smash his favorite velocipede just to see if he would mind! The essential thing which we must make plain is that "God told Abraham" means Abraham *thought* God was telling him, but that it was a mistake, a mistake that was not so strange in those times when people thought God was pleased if men gave him costly gifts like one of the animals which they owned and valued highly and still more pleased if occasionally they gave something more precious, even one of their children. Men were free to do this since in those days fathers possessed the power of life and death over wife and children. This must be carefully explained, as the conception

of animal or child sacrifice is so far removed from our practice today.

Dean Hodges treats the story in "The Garden of Eden" in the above way, and in his "Old Testament Stories in Modern Light" Rhondda Williams ends the story thus: "How thankful we ought to be that we are not living in that rude, dark time, when people thought it was a religious thing, and pleasing to God, to put their children to death; but in this better time, when all parents who want to please God only think of bringing up their children in the best way by training them for a true life. What all fathers and mothers should now remember is that God still wants their children, though not in that old, cruel way. And you boys and girls should remember that God wants you, not to die for Him but to live for Him. We should be very thankful now that we know the Will of God much better than Abraham did." It would be wise to call attention in connection with this story to the famous passage from the prophecy of Micah which states that God does not want human sacrifice (Mic. 6:6-8).

The same kind of treatment (that it is a mistaken idea of God) is all that can make the story of Jephthah acceptable. Here there is no protest as in the Abraham story against human sacrifice but there is a bright spot in the daughter's willingness to die for her country. "It is Jephthah's daughter we admire in the old story. Her ideas were wrong, and there was really no need for the sacrifice at all, but she could not help her darkness, it was the darkness, of her age; the grand thing about her is that because she did think it was necessary for her to die for the good of the people and the honor of her father, she was willing. That was a touch of the spirit which made Jesus willing to die on the Cross, it is the spirit that sinks self for the good of others. We are called to exercise it, not in dying

for the world, but in living for it." <sup>8</sup> It is evident that this sort of explanation cannot be grasped by very young children and therefore the story should not be used with them.

Another Old Testament problem that is difficult to handle is the conception that God punishes and rewards, with immediate and external evidences of his approval or disapproval. While it is not the conception of the way God deals with sin and goodness that most of us hold, the difference is rather a subtle one to make clear to children. After all, do not the stories give in the concrete, definite form in which children can best grasp it, the idea that God does not let wrong doers go scot free and sees to it that ultimately good results do follow from right choices? But we do not want such experiences as those reported earlier in the chapter to result from this view of rewards and punishments. The fear of God and his swift and terrible vengeance as shown in disaster and death that form so large a part of early religion must not dominate, perhaps must not be a part of a child's thought of the Heavenly Father.

Dr. Griggs-Smith became much interested in children's thinking along this line and collected from children eleven to thirteen years of age 4000 answers in writing to the question: "If a boy (or a girl) tells a lie and is not found out, will he be punished? If so, give details as to how you think he will be punished?" These children had all been studying the Bible every day in school. The great majority of the answers betray the strong influence of early Hebrew conceptions. "We may get run over by accident, but God made the accident." "If she was a woman, God would punish her by taking her baby from her or making her marry a wicked husband." "Another

<sup>8</sup> Rhonda Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

way he could punish me is to make me always afraid and always very unlucky." "Perhaps he (the offender) will be poorly and go through much suffering, for God is always slow and sure." "By illness or death which otherwise would not have happened. If she is not punished in these ways, the children after her will have it handed on to them." "God might let his house be struck by lightning or something fall on him and kill him." "Lot's wife disobeyed God and she was changed into a pillar of salt. The girl who has told the lie may be changed into a pillar of salt." Only a few answers suggest punishment by an uneasy conscience or by loss of the trust of others or by a sense of the disapproval of God. But surely such ideas as these are not beyond the comprehension of children; even the second, which is perhaps the most difficult, has been made intelligible to children in such stories as that of the shepherd boy who cried, "Wolf, Wolf."

Miss Lily Dougall, writing on the Biblical ideas of punishment and our confused thinking on the subject to-day, says: "The students of modern psychology and pedagogy are telling us that the subconscious fear of punishment contracted in childhood is the cause of half of our nervous diseases, ill-humors, and habitual deceits. Others are showing us that when attention is fixed upon fear of punishment it is never concerned with the fear of evil desires. The murderer restrained by fear of hanging, desires to kill; the thief afraid of prison still desires to rob and the desire if choked off in one direction fructifies in many other forms of social ills. These reformers ask if the fear of sin would not be a nobler emotion for the church to inculcate than the fear of punishment."<sup>9</sup>

Would it not be possible to show children that the Hebrew people thought for a long time that accidents,

<sup>9</sup> *Hibbert Journal*, Oct., 1923.



tragedies, misfortune and especially sudden death indicated the punishment of God and therefore must mean that the one suffering had done wrong? It should then be made very clear that we no longer argue from calamities either to sin in the one who suffers or to anger in God; very often such things happen to the best of people. Reference can be made to Jesus' teaching that the Tower of Siloam did not fall on the people because they had sinned and that his disciples would have to suffer many things as they went about their work for the Kingdom. It should be made clear also that very often when people do wrong, no punishment by outward misfortune follows, but that the sense of shame, the knowledge that God is sorry and the realization that we harm other people through our sins and lose their trust and respect is our punishment. It is far wiser to give a child the idea that God is sorry than the idea that God is angry, otherwise the sense that God is present everywhere and sees all will grow into the thought of him as a spy or tyrant. The way in which Jesus tells us that God searches for the lost sheep, and welcomes the sinning son when he is repentant can be compared with the idea of God in the flood story, where it is suggested that all that can be done with sinners is to drown them and start afresh.

Another large group of stories in the Old Testament give us the Hebrew people's ideas of patriotism (often narrow nationalism); of war (not condemned except in the prophecies); of war heroes (lauded to the skies); of methods in war (often cruelty to non-combatants and trickery and treachery which are reported with no suggestion of disapproval); of treatment of foes (retaliatory, vindictive and merciless); of Jehovah as a God of war (hating his people's enemies, leading his own people to victory). What shall we do with these?

It must be explained to the children that public opinion against war has developed very slowly and that it could not be looked for in those rude days; that much daring and suffering in war was undertaken because of love for country, in disregard of selfish interests, and with a courage for which we honor the Hebrew heroes. We must not forget, however, (1) to set the prophets' equally patriotic dreams of a day when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation" and when all shall be brothers and the strong serve the weak, over against the stories which show no dawning of such a hope; (2) to show that one of the great evils of war is the way it turns men's standards upside down so that it is hard to say what is treachery and what is cruelty; (3) to emphasize Jesus' teaching of the fineness of the spirit which rises above revenge and his positive condemnation of the old "pay-back" standards of justice. A good illustration of this way of using an Old Testament story is found in another of Rhondda Williams' tales. After giving the story of the Gibeonites from the Book of Joshua he says, "It is shameful if we are content to do the things they did. . . . If you ever read these tales in the books of Joshua—tales of that cruel old world when men believed that God approved of such actions—I hope you will hate their deeds, and think quite differently of God from what Joshua and his people thought, and realize that the God who is the Father of all men, demands that all men shall behave justly and kindly to one another, and that the strong shall help the weak instead of oppressing them." Again, "What I want you to notice in the whole story of the conquest of Canaan is that in that time revenge was considered a duty. No wonder it took hundreds of years for these Israelites to become civilized. 'Joshua' and 'Jesus' are one and the same name, Joshua being the Hebrew and Jesus the Greek form. But

what a difference between the two! It meant climbing upwards gradually for hundreds of years to reach Jesus from Joshua. In Joshua's day and in Joshua's own mind revenge was a duty. But Jesus gives us a new rule—a rule, however, which we have not sufficiently learnt yet, which many people find it most difficult to act upon, but which is undoubtedly the right one, 'Bless them that persecute you, pray for your enemies.' These words are spoken out of a life lived among men who were not at all kind to Jesus. You should never read the Book of Joshua without reading the Sermon on the Mount. There you see the high peaks of the better life, into which we are climbing, shining in the light of Divine Love. Jesus is our leader away from all spirit of revenge and cruelty to that life in which men shall brothers be." <sup>10</sup>

Interesting problems for the teacher of ethics are presented by the Samson stories which have been used in work with children, both by those who feel that they must admire every Hebrew hero, even the selfish, uncontrolled, prank-playing "bad boy of the Old Testament" and by those who see chances there for discriminating study and lessons on what to condemn and avoid! The difference is illustrated by two titles for the Samson lesson in different Sunday School series; "Samson, A Strong and Affectionate Young Man" and "Samson, A Strong Man With A Wrong Ambition." Once again I quote from Rhondda Williams an example of frankness in showing up Samson's weaknesses in a way that is profitable to boys and girls.

"A school boy once wrote an essay on Samson, which he finished by saying that Samson killed an awful lot of Philistines, and though in the end he was also killed him-

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 61-65.

self, he did not mind that. Well, there is not anything much better than that to say about Samson, and if you had never heard about him it would be no loss to you, so far as his character is concerned. The only reason, I think, why he has been written about in the Bible is that he did kill a lot of Philistines, and the Israelites came to look upon any man who had done that as having served them a good turn. Samson's killing the Philistines was not even animated by any national ambition or patriotic motive; it was more a matter of personal revenge. . . . You must always be on your guard against taking your ideas of God from these old stories. The people then thought that God would do almost anything that they would. . . . Now Samson was a very weak man who had a very strong body. The character makes the man, and in character Samson was a pygmy, while in physical strength he was a giant. I want you to remember this, so as not to misunderstand what is meant when the Bible tells you that it was 'the Spirit of the Lord' that came upon Samson that led him to do the things he did. In those days that was the way they explained any extraordinary strength; if Sandow had lived in that time they would have said at every exhibition of his great strength which he gave that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. It does not mean that Samson was a good man, nor that he did the right thing. It is true that God gives us our physical strength, but the impulse to use it in the wrong way must not, therefore, be considered 'of the Lord.' Now there is a great deal of admiration given today to exhibitions of physical strength, but we do insist that physical strength in an individual shall not be used to injure other individuals. Let us see clearly that the great thing is not to have strength so much as to have character, and that if we have strength the greatest privilege is to

use it in helping others. 'Ye that are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak.'"<sup>11</sup>

This method of using Bible stories has never yet been in vogue. I find many college girls who have supposed that Samson was a wholly admirable character, who have never thought of Jacob's method of securing the birth-right as trickery, who have considered Solomon in every way a king of whom to be proud. There is perhaps more to be gained for right living today in viewing Solomon's tyranny and selfish ambition as the Hebrew northerners did when they came to his son and refused to serve him unless he should lighten the grievous yoke which his father had laid on their shoulders, than in viewing Solomon with all the pride in his glory which shines through the records that come to us from his own tribe of Judah.

In teaching young people from this point of view the question often arises why God waited so long before giving men the full revelation of truth in Jesus. But when they stop to think, they can always answer the question for themselves and realize that revelation depends as much on the power to comprehend and to respond on the one side, as on the possession of the truth and the desire to convey it on the other side. "A perfect revelation bestowed on imperfect minds would be about as useful and sensible as the recital of a table of logarithms to an infant in arms." A simple illustration is that of the father who wishes to share his fullest life with his child, but who begins reading kindergarten rhymes to him rather than his own favorite passages from Shakespeare. Some things there are that even the little child can learn about his father—but his principles in business or politics the father does not talk of till the child has grown in power to com-

<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 94-97.

prehend. Always eager to give of his best, a wise parent must watch for developments, must give here a little and there a little more, being very patient with childish misconceptions and ignorances. So "God knows the truth but waits" till "the thoughts of men are widened with the setting of the suns."

But though we cannot be blind to the inadequacies in the early thought of God, we must, also, recognize that the conception of God which men had in those days made him a reality to them and that it fitted their needs as our own more spiritual conception could never have done. When their great necessity was to win in their battles against the powerful foes who were doing their utmost to drive them out and keep them out of the Land of Canaan, a God who hated the Hebrews' enemies and led his people to victory filled a place in their lives that a God of love for all peoples could never have been made to do. Through an unworthy conception of him that brought him near to them they were gaining an essentially right conception of him as a God who counted for something in their lives, one who was interested in them, had a purpose for them, to whom they must be loyal and with whom they must coöperate if they hoped for success. So we must not count their mistakes all loss and no gain.

It helps also to think of all mankind as pilgrims, traveling "on to the bounds of the waste, on to the city of God." The great pioneers of Bible times were brave travelers who faced some difficulties unknown to us and yet made progress, a progress we profit by, for the trees are blazed and danger points are marked and the path is beaten hard for our feet. Therefore we may go more rapidly over the part of the way already trodden and on into hitherto unexplored country. This affords a way out of that disrespect for the older forms of thought which young people

of today so readily cultivate, kindles an admiration in us for those who thought out what we today are able to assume without question and constitutes a challenge to us to do as well for our generation as these ancient Hebrews did for theirs.

Thoughts that great hearts once broke for  
We breathe cheaply as the common air;  
The dust we trample heedlessly  
Throbbled once in saints and martyrs rare  
Who perished, opening for their race  
New pathways to the commonplace.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVELATION OF GOD TO MEN

WE are eager to make religion a vital experience to our children and the heart of a religious experience as distinguished from a mere system of ethics is certainly the realization of a contact between the spirit of man and the spirit of God—a sense that “spirit with spirit can meet” with rich results for both. This sense of the reality of the presence of God is probably gained more readily for most of us from contact with those who already have it than from any instruction that could be given. True religion is “caught, not taught,” but in addition to the chance to “catch” it by contagion from living persons, there should be the chance to gain it from the experiences of those great spirits who left in the Bible an imperishable record of their life with God.

The difficulty is that the account of that experience is often given in a form which makes it seem a thing outside of the spiritual possibilities for most of us. Apparently men then saw God right here on our friendly earth, his angels came with messages from the skies or he himself spoke to perplexed men directly in a way that left them in no shadow of a doubt as to what they were to say or do or think. Men were vouchsafed visions of God in his heavens, visions which made them completely over from ordinary men into wise and righteous leaders. If we give these accounts with no explanation, the result may be that



it will be taken for granted that these men were specially favored, were the recipients of revelations of a sort which would settle all our difficulties, but which somehow or other never come to us, who are left to carry on one-sided conversations in our prayers, left even to wonder whether there is one who hears, since he evidently does not choose to answer us with equal directness. Apparently the times when religion was made easy are over and we cannot hope to repeat the Biblical experience; just what kind of an experience as an alternative we should expect is open to question.

Or on the other hand, the result may be an expectation of a somewhat similar visionary or ecstatic experience; if not the sound or sight of God, at least an emotional experience which would be so different from our ordinary feelings that we would know beyond a peradventure that we were in the presence of God. The persuasion is so common that ordinary thought processes, ordinary emotional responses, ordinary obedience to conscience is not real religion. It does not sound like Biblical religion and isn't that the standard? Because something different is expected the voice of God is not recognized where it is to be found in our human experiences and the conclusion comes to be, "Religion is not for me." Naturally this is not a child's reaction, but it is the reaction in the youth or adult which is based on the impressions of religion received through all the early years.

If our children connect the idea of true revelation with something seen or heard, there are likely to be other harmful results. The emphasis is on the physical over against the spiritual as the source and ground of reality, as the significant and trustworthy thing. That which is external can be counted on, is the standpoint adopted, but that which is purely spiritual is evasive, such stuff as dreams are

made of; if not unreal, at least undemonstrable and not secure enough to build a life on. Such an emphasis on the external is the arch-enemy to true religion, an enemy that has to be reckoned with today as perhaps the chief menace which Christianity faces. Dr. Wm. P. Merrill well says, "Where lies the real fight today? Can anyone doubt? This is the real center of the battle, where Christianity must hold or lose the whole fight: in the struggle between the material and spiritual interpretations of life. The fight today is between those on the one hand who say that the only reality is material, physical reality and the ultimate test of it the use of the senses; and those on the other hand who affirm that the spiritual is the real, and that the ultimate test of reality is spiritual experience. Here is the one point in the far-flung battle line between faith and unbelief of which we can truthfully say that, as goes the battle here, so all goes."

Those who have tried by the historical study of the Bible to create a vital religious faith in young people trained in the older theories, will agree with Dr. Merrill. The great stumbling block in the way of such students is their supposition that faith must be pinned to what some one once saw or heard with physical eyes or ears. Question that assumption, try to shift their focus from the voice of God speaking distinct words from the heavens or writing distinct words on tablets, to the voice of the spirit, heard by the spirit only and the impression created is that you have shifted from God to man, from the certain to the fallible, from firm ground to the quicksand. As I see it, the problem before us is threefold:

(1) How shall we make clear to the children that the religious experience recorded in the Bible was of the same nature as ours and can therefore help us to hear and under-

stand the voice of God? At the same time we must aid children to recognize that many of these "Bible men" showed more capacity for understanding God than we and we may therefore turn in humility and gratitude to them for enlightenment.

(2) How shall we help children to realize that there are different channels through which God's truth reaches men and that varied forms of expression are natural and equally legitimate?

(3) How shall we help them to identify the essential elements of religion in all these varying experiences, to test truth not by the manner of its coming into the minds of men, but by its content?

In teaching young children we need to remember that no matter how spiritual a conception of God we try to impart, they are bound to think of everything concretely and will interpret our words in such a way as to form a sense image of a God who will be far more of a reality to them than ever our spiritual God could be. Una Hunt tells us in her delightful book, "Una Mary," that she understood the hymn "Guard the Sailor Tossing on the Deep Blue Sea" not as "Guard" but as "God, the Sailor." "So I thought of God as taking summer vacations from heaven and going, as many of our friends did, to the sea-shore where he went sailing all day long. I always pictured him on a sloop, standing leaning against the mast, dressed of course in a white sailor suit with a dark blue collar and anchors embroidered on his sleeves. I had a sailor doll that was dressed so. I liked to think of him there instead of always up in heaven and grew very fond of 'God, the sailor.' He seemed so much nearer to me than God in heaven."

The inevitable tendency of children to interpret concretely is shown in one student's statement that she thought

the response in the Episcopal service, "make clean our hearts within us" was "make clean our hearts with Inus," Inus being some kind of cleansing polish with which God scrubbed our hearts. It appears also in the statement of another that she was perplexed by being told that "God is love"; she thought that if people would only say, God *does* love or God *has* love she could understand. For this reason the wisest teachers of children speak of God as the Heavenly Father rather than as a Spirit or as an invisible Presence and are not troubled if the child visualizes him, tries to draw him, even pretends to be God when acting out a story. We know that in the course of time the child will outgrow that crude anthropomorphism naturally and that the important thing is to make sure that his conceptions of the *character* of God are essentially right and that the idea is "clear and definite enough to guide his actions."

It follows that the stories of God appearing and talking to men, even of God "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" will be entirely natural to the little child and require no explanation. But the suggestion may well be given early that we do not need to have a spoken voice come to our ears in order to hear God. Remind the child that if instead of saying a prayer aloud he should say it to himself, or just think it, God would hear him. So God talks to us. It is well even with a little child to give some idea that there is a response in prayer so that he shall not think of contact with God as consisting merely of our own requests or thanks. As an aid to him before he is old enough to think of any form of response which God may be making, it is possible to use after the evening prayer such a verse as the following, the mother saying it in a low reverent tone while the child, still on his knees, listens. Later the child may be encouraged to learn it and repeat

it to himself after his prayer of petition and still later to vary it in any way he wishes.

Yes, my little child, I hear you,  
I am glad you prayed to me,  
For prayer always brings me near you,  
Though my face you cannot see.

Better than you know, I love you,  
Watch you through your work and play;  
May the thought of one above you  
Keep you happy all the day!

While you sleep I'll still be near you,  
And tomorrow shall we try  
To make other people happy?  
We can do it—you and I!

That even young children respond to the idea of silent prayer is shown by the success attending the experiment of including that element in the service of worship for children in the Union Theological School of Religion. One boy found it so real an experience that he objected that the time for it was too short, saying, "They always interrupt me."

The story of the boy Samuel, so often used with children, furnishes an excellent opportunity to introduce the discussion of the way God speaks to us. Sometimes children themselves question, as did the boy of whom Mrs. Mumford tells us in "The Dawn of Religion." "Louis said, 'Father, I don't understand clearly why I can't hear God when he speaks just as I hear you. Samuel did. It says so in the Bible, but I've tried for ever so long and I can't hear anything.' Wondering how best to reply and longing to help, the father looked searchingly and lovingly at the little boy and swiftly the little lad ran across the

room and threw himself down into his father's lap. And then in a flash, the father himself knew a true answer to his boy's question. 'Why did you come to me, Laddie? I never called you,' he said and Louis crept closer. 'I knew you wanted me, father. I just knew.' Then his father told him that just as he knew his earthly father's thoughts without needing to hear his voice, so—when we love him—we know our Heavenly Father's thoughts and in our hearts we hear his call; there is no need for words."

One could draw on the child's experience to bring out this same idea even when the particular incidents of the time do not make the answer quite so natural. When the children do not question, the teacher can question them as did one in the Union School of Religion, who writes: "The story of God's speaking to Samuel was told in the chapel service. It seemed to me that if the story was to have any value for First Grade children, they should connect it with God's revelations of Himself to people today. Therefore in the class room, in our discussion of chapel, I asked them whether God ever spoke to them. They seemed to think not. I then told them of two children who had been in my classes in other years, one of whom said when he heard beautiful organ music that it seemed as if God were speaking. The other said that God spoke to him when he was hammering and his mother had a headache, and God told him not to hammer. My recollection is that the children said that God was speaking to the small boy through his conscience, and that He spoke to them sometimes through their consciences."

For older children and young people various suggestions will be given in the remainder of the chapter, which may be utilized at whatever age they seem appropriate. They reflect the attempts of different teachers to meet the need all feel. Many are the ways in which one may show

that the Biblical religious experience was in line with our own. It is well to emphasize all that the stories suggest but do not always openly state, of the preparation in everyday ethical living, in right choices at moments of decision, in steady attempts to live in harmony with the will of God, which qualified these men of the Bible to understand the voice of God, when it spoke through conscience. That conscience is not something else than God, but God himself as far as he is able to get at us, should be made clear. It may be explained that he is oftentimes hindered from getting at us successfully by a great many things, our ignorances and wrong habits, the mistaken teaching of others, and by foolish customs and conventions which we follow blindly. We must try, therefore, to keep improving our consciences by asking advice, by reading and thinking, in order that God may have a chance to speak to us in the way he wants to. Whenever we are doing our part, we can be sure that God is doing his and can go ahead to trust his voice as it speaks within us. Dr. Russell Bowie brings out clearly this connection between right conduct and the voice of God in one of his sermons for children. He tells of two boys who did kind things which were a bit difficult, and then he says, "Now these two boys were much like Samuel. God's voice was speaking in their heart and instead of making believe they did not know it, they stood up and answered, 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.' God will always be speaking to us in that way and giving us helpful things to do for him if we are not afraid to listen. If we are thinking a great deal about ourselves and about what we would like to do . . . then we will stop hearing God's voice distinctly and after a while we will get to thinking that he does not speak at all. But we will hear it more and more all the time if every time we do hear it we rise

quickly and say, 'Here am I, for thou calledst me,' " <sup>1</sup>

In studying the life of Moses, one may point out that the revelation which came to him in the realization that a powerful and compassionate God was ready to help a down-trodden people out of their distress was directly in line with the best in Moses' own character. If he had been a man who was satisfied to enjoy all he could get for himself, unconcerned about the troubles of his less fortunate countrymen, God could not have made him understand the new truth that was waiting to be made known. So with Amos, if he had not been troubled by the injustice shown by the richer classes in Israel, how could God have made him grasp the thought of the all-controlling justice which governed the world? As Stevenson says, "All speech, whether written or spoken, is in a dead language until it finds a willing and prepared hearer." If man does not do his part in preparing himself by the finest kind of living to receive God's messages, and yield himself to them in fullest obedience when they do come, God is unable to teach him new truths. Older pupils will enjoy a recent poem which expresses the kind of effort put forth by the prophets in terms which render it intelligible today.

He leans the shoulder of his brain  
Against the doors of mystery—  
Those giant, space-confining bars,  
Securely braced by sun and stars,  
That guard the trove of days to be.  
His lever is a long, long thought;  
His fulcrum is an iron will;  
His strength is of the pure in heart:  
And mightily do these avail.  
The stubborn hinges slowly fail

<sup>1</sup> *The Children's Year*, p. 80.



Before his calm, insistent pain.  
The narrow chink grows wide, until  
His eager eye a glimpse has caught  
Of Truth's illimitable sea;  
And on his soul unfolds the chart  
Of his poor race's destiny.\*

A statement by another modern writer is significant also: "Truth is not a theory nor a set of facts; it is a spiritual thing and the price thereof is obedience."

Closely allied to the part played by the conscience and the disciplined will is the keeping alive of the longing of the heart for God even through discouragement and the persistence of the search which that longing sustains. Two of the men who have done most to make the Old Testament a marvelously rich book, Jeremiah and the author of Job, exemplify this most clearly. The questions, complaints and petitions which are poured out in Jeremiah's prayers when the hand of every man seemed against him, show that it was far from easy for him to gain the sense that he craved of the companionship and support of God. He has to cry out, "Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou indeed be to me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" (15:18) before he can say, "Jehovah, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in the day of affliction" (16:19), or "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (29:13) So the great questioning soul that speaks for us through the pages of the book of Job fought his way through bitterness of spirit and a sense of utter desertion by God, crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" (23:3) before he gained the peace that came through the assurance of the presence of God in his heart. One of

\* E. D. Schonberger, *Christian Century*, June 28, 1923.

the best ways of helping young people to feel that the experience of the men who wrote the Bible is in some ways comparable to their own is to make clear the struggles and the weary waiting that these great natures endured as part of the process of getting "in tune with the Infinite." If that was so of them, who are we that we should expect a quick and easy road to the heights?

The many evidences in the Bible of the part that nature played in helping to make the truth of God known to men can be used as another means of connecting ancient with modern religious experience. The Hebrews of Bible times lived out of doors a great deal and their expression of religious truth is so linked up with appreciation of nature that it is reasonable to believe that nature aided them profoundly in their first realization of such truth as well as in their attempt to convey its meaning. Scores of references combining the beauty or power of nature with deep religious feeling can be used from prophets and psalmists, references which will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of many young people. What these Bible writers felt is what we feel or might feel if we were spiritually less blind and deaf.

The same use can be made of the indications that silence and solitude helped the Bible writers to understand God. Moses off alone on the mountain slopes with only his sheep, Elijah taking a long journey away from men that he might be by himself on that same mountain and there hearing, "the sound of a soft stillness,"<sup>3</sup> and Amos tending his flocks and pruning his sycamore trees, were enabled to comprehend something which might have been missed had they not been able to escape from the distractions of the crowd. So the psalmists who wrote, "Be still and know that I am

<sup>3</sup> As Professor Bewer translates, "the still small voice." *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 48.

God" and "Commune with your own heart on your bed and be still," so Paul retiring to Arabia to be alone with God before beginning his active life among men, so Jesus himself, in his lonely vigils of nights spent in prayer or of weeks in the wilderness, all unite to show us one of the ways in which men may help God to reach them. It is this truth that Lowell had in mind when he wrote,

If chosen souls could never be alone  
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,  
No greatness ever had been dreamed or done,  
The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude.

So many ways are suggested in the Bible by which God has made it possible for men to find him that it is easy to understand what the modern writer meant when he said,

Short arms needs man to reach to heaven,  
So ready is heaven to stoop to him.

No one need fear that such study as the above is going to result in bringing the Bible down to a low level, or in making it just an ordinary book. In fact, the more fully one comes to enter into it by sharing the religious experiences of the writers, the more capable one becomes of appreciating the unusual quality of spirit that finds expression there. The better success one has in reproducing a similar religious experience in one's pupils today, the less need there is of telling them how "inspired" the Bible is. It is wiser to let children and young people find out its worth and value by helping them to understand it, by sharing with them one's own sense of the Bible's beauty and helpfulness till they come to value it for themselves than it is to teach them statements about the book which can only be formal without the experience.

For those who wish to use the term "inspiration," Dean Hodges' way of explaining it may win approval. In his "Training of Children in Religion" he defines inspiration as akin to genius: "Here is one who, by the grace of God, is uncommonly sensitive to certain aspects of the world about him. He feels more than we do and sees more than we do. He is singularly aware of form and color and is able to interpret the beauty of the world in works of art. He shows us wonders which we did not know. Or he is singularly appreciative of human nature, looks with a new clearness of vision into the souls of men, interprets what they do and mean and tells us in the language of poetry. Or he has the gift of understanding nature, of perceiving combinations of materials and forces which have never been combined and of getting results which contribute both to science and to life. These men are different from us. When we endeavor to explain them, we say that they are men of genius. This does not by any means define them. It only expresses our sense of the mystery of their achievements. When we take this over into the realm of religion, we perceive that here too is genius. Here are men who are markedly sensitive to the unseen and eternal, who see with altogether uncommon plainness the subtle difference between right and wrong . . . who are aware of God. These men are able to hear the voice of God. . . . This sensitiveness and receptiveness which in art, letters and science is called genius is in religion called inspiration. Men thus inspired wrote the Bible."

To come now to our second problem—the explanation of the different methods by which men grasp and express religious truths. Whether comparing individuals in the Bible with one another or comparing Biblical writers with men of other times we find varying methods of expression.

These are determined partly by differences of race and environment, partly by differences of temperament and inherited custom. We must make this clear so that our children shall not expect all men to lay hold on God in the same manner, nor to tell of what life has proved true for them in the same way. In other words, we must consider how best to deal with the passages referred to early in the chapter where God is represented as appearing to men, sending them his angels, talking directly to them or where he makes his will known through dreams, interpretation of signs, the use of the sacred lot, or ecstatic states.

The omission of some material, and the re-wording of some statements (as Dean Hodges does when he says, "There came a quick voice *in Abraham's heart* and the voice called 'Abraham'"), may suffice for a while but something more is necessary as children grow older and read more of the stories in full as they are written in the Bible. Such questions will then be met as one teacher reports from a seventh grade girl: "Wasn't that just a story? You said the death angel passed over. We don't believe there is any such thing as a death angel, do we? How do you figure that out? Was this just a story the Jews made up? There wasn't any such angel, I thought." Such challenges of interpretation as another teacher reports will also occur; "When Elijah fleeing from Jezebel was fed by 'an angel,' I suggested that it might have been his servant, who would naturally want to take care of his master. One of the girls to whom I was teaching the lesson said, 'But it *says* an angel!' I told her that when her mother took care of me during a day's illness I called her 'a good angel' and that the meaning of the word angel at first was messenger."

It is quite evident that the best way to treat the primitive methods of learning the will of God (by lot, signs,

dreams, and ecstatic states) and the early crude anthropomorphisms (such as are found in Ex. 33:20-33; Ex. 24:9-11 and Gen. 3:8) is to deal with them frankly as outgrown conceptions. Set side by side in contrast "They beheld God and did eat and drink" and "No man hath seen God at any time." It should be made clear however, that even though we no longer think of God as having a human form which men's eyes could see, yet the reality of God and of his nearness to human beings which is brought out in these stories is still precious truth to us. They were right, also, in believing that in some ways God is like men, though his likeness to us in the highest personal qualities, love, righteousness and purposefulness no longer requires us to think him like us in physical characteristics. So the stories of David casting the lot, of Gideon interpreting signs, of Saul sharing the ecstasies of the "sons of the prophets," of Solomon receiving a revelation by a dream, all eloquently testify that men then as now, did want to learn God's will before making important decisions, did want to come into close contact with him. It is that desire which binds us to them in sympathy in spite of the fact that we no longer use their methods of finding God's will.

As far as the visions and voices are concerned, the older children can perhaps grasp in an elementary way the fact that different races have different gifts. Just as we in America and Europe have practical ability and executive skill, so do the best people in India today have a power to concentrate on and comprehend the things of the spirit that we lack. Oriental peoples have usually had a greater religious sensitiveness than others and this may be connected with a certain organization of the nervous system which makes them have more readily than do we the type of experience which they report as visions and voices of

God. It is certainly true that such experiences are very common even today in the East. Missionaries say that the people in Syria and Palestine are continually reporting that they have had visions and heard voices as if it were the most natural and ordinary kind of an experience. Abraham M. Rihbany, a native of Syria, says in his "Christ Story for Boys and Girls," "I do not know how many times I heard it stated in my native land and at our own firesides that heavenly messengers in the forms of patron saints or angels came to good wives in dreams and visions and cheered them with a promise of a child."

Doubtless some Orientals were more disposed than others to that kind of experience, just as some individuals among us who are more susceptible to influences affecting the spirit, have experiences which the rest of us do not share. We may come in the future to understand more than we do at present the reasons why spiritual influences affect different people differently.

It is well to remind ourselves also that certain methods of expression become habitual or traditional in certain countries and in certain ages. Probably in many cases it was not the initial experience, but the way it was reported that is so different from our own. It is this which accounts for the strangeness we puzzle over. Mr. Rihbany says in his "Syrian Christ," "The Orientals' manner of speech has been that of a worshiper and not that of a business man or an industrial worker in the modern western sense. To the Syrian of today, as to his ancient ancestor, life, with all its activities and cares, revolves around a religious center. . . . Note the Syrians' daily language; it is essentially Biblical. He has no secular language. . . . When you ask a Syrian about his business he will not answer, 'We are doing well at present,' but 'God is giving bounteously.' To one starting on a journey

the phrase is not 'Take good care of yourself,' but 'Go, in the keeping and protection of God.'"<sup>4</sup> In a lecture on the "Oriental Background of the Bible" Mr. Rihbany mentioned the intensity and positiveness of Eastern speech, the fact that the Oriental does not speak in literal terms and that he assumes no one will understand him so; that he speaks with a certain fearlessness and assurance of being right. He would say, "The spirit of the Lord came unto me saying, 'Son of man, prophesy'; never as the more precise and cautious Anglo-Saxon might say, 'It seemed to me like the spirit of God and I'll do my best in my poor way.'"

Redlich in "Old Testament Stories and How to Teach Them," thinks a difference is noticeable here between Old and New Testament methods of expression. He says, "In the New Testament John the Baptist goes into the wilderness and preaches. An Old Testament writer would have written, 'And it came to pass in those days that the Lord said unto John, 'Go into the wilderness and there will I meet thee' and the Lord said to him in the wilderness, 'Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The writer of the first Gospel says the same thing but in far different language. 'And in those days cometh John, the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Similarly J. Morgan Jones in his "New Testament in Modern Education" suggests that Cromwell had as real a sense of God's guidance as the Bible writers and that it would be interesting to compare the Bible account of an event with one of Cromwell's reports to parliament and put one into the form of the other.

In view of these things, the explanation can be given that when we read an account of the experience of God's

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 81-87.



presence such as Moses had or Isaiah, Ezekiel, or St. Paul, it is sometimes difficult to be sure how much of its apparent singularity is due to the choice of a means of expression and how much due to the fact that the way in which the presence of God was made real in the first place was different from the experiences most of us have. What counts is the fact that an individual was sure that he was in vital contact with God; the method in which the assurance came to him and the manner of his expression of it is of less importance. Somehow (and here is our third problem) we must teach our pupils not to stop outside with the form of expression but to find a door by which to get inside to the spiritual realities, to recognize that a visionary experience does not establish anything one way or the other in regard to the worth of what comes through it, is in itself no evidence either for or against the worth of the message, but it is subject to the rule that one must "try all things," that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." Whatever blesses and benefits the spirit of man, carries its own credentials and needs no others.

Once in teaching the life of Paul to a group of twelve-year-old boys, I told the story of the vision on the road to Damascus as vividly as I could, with no attempt at explanation and had no sooner finished than one of the most thoughtful in the class said positively, "Miss S., you know that might have been just a sunstroke." We took the question up seriously, asked what were the ordinary after-effects of a sunstroke, noted that one could go on about his usual work but had to be more careful than most people about keeping his head covered so as not to be exposed again and then we turned to Paul's life to find out what the results of his experience were. The boy soon answered his own question; there was

something very different here, judging by the after-effects. So in each of the other instances named above, the way in which the life was lived after the vision shows clearly enough that only an experience of God himself could account for what followed. In the story of Isaiah's vision the sense of unworthiness in the presence of a God of awe-inspiring majesty and righteousness, the sense of moral cleansing and forgiveness, the realization of a purpose of God for the carrying out of which human help was needed and then the eager, spontaneous offering of self are all clearly discernible. These are the things that should be emphasized whether or no one feels that one can with any confidence explain the *method* in which they became realities to the man who had the vision. It can also be safely inferred, as suggested in discussing our first problem, that Isaiah was not an ordinary young man whom Jehovah called in from the street and to whom he gave a vision which made him a prophet, but that everything previous in his life had prepared him to rise to this opportunity, to enter in spirit into the "secret places of the Most High." It is interesting to note that he did not have another experience of this kind in all the years of his long and devoted service to his people; during the rest of his life he lived without visions even as most of us must. What we need to wish for is not a vision, but a living contact with God which will do for us what Isaiah's vision did for him, "take the dimness of our souls away" and set our feet on a plain highway to a career of usefulness in the service of God and man.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOME SPECIAL NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES

It is with trepidation that one approaches a discussion of the teaching problems of the New Testament today, for they are many and difficult. Some who are willing to use historical methods of study with the Old Testament, shrink and hesitate as they approach the New. The feeling of many is that scholars may do what they like with the Old Testament if they will leave the New Testament alone. It is a natural feeling, since most that is vital in religion for us centers there.

What does it matter, really, if Jonah is only a parable figure? Nothing especially sacred to most people is connected with the thought of Jonah as an historical character. But the New Testament goes to the very heart of Christianity and when anything as precious as that has once been associated with a certain set of ideas, most of us want those ideas left just as they were, lest a change should mean loss. We may have to struggle with that attitude in our pupils or in ourselves. We know that we cannot be wholly proud of an attitude which assumes without investigation that certain cherished ideas are correct, thus offering very little room for growth. When we honestly consider the question we realize that we cannot "leave the New Testament alone." If it is right to use historical methods in the Old Testament, the same methods must hold in the study of the New Testament. The use

of any other methods would mean doing an injustice to the New Testament. This is especially true if we undertake to teach the New Testament to children and young people today. We teachers must be ready, as part of our responsibility, to study afresh the records of that matchless life by the best methods our age offers. Otherwise we put into the hands of youth a faded tintype of the Master, which may be dear and hallowed by old associations to us, but will not be nearly as clear or interesting to them as a modern photograph.

After laying aside inclinations and preconceived notions, other difficulties confront the New Testament teacher. There are more uncertainties to deal with than in the Old Testament. Some things to be sure, are agreed on by scholars, as that Mark was earlier in date than Matthew and Luke and was used as a written source by them both. There is still much difference of opinion, however, as to Matthew's and Luke's other sources, the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, and the extent to which other minds than Jesus' own are represented in all the gospels. Another difficulty is that Christian believers who agree that religion must grow and in the process cast off much that was once insisted on as essential, are still so little agreed as to what is essential that no one way of teaching many of the New Testament subjects could possibly satisfy them all.

Out of these difficulties two special questions arise. One of them concerns the advisability of letting children and young people know of these uncertainties and these disagreements among scholars and among the rank and file of Christians. Some would answer in the negative, for, they would say, in public school studies there is not nearly so much uncertainty. Children get from their study of arithmetic, geography, and the sciences, the

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idea that people *know the facts*. Will it not discredit religion in their eyes if we must speak with hesitation concerning things in the New Testament? What will be the effect on them of admitting that some questions are still unsolved? Is it better for children to believe in the omniscience of grown folks as long as they can? Will they get the idea that there is no use trying to understand if no one can be certain, or that it doesn't much matter what you think, for there will surely be some one to agree with you?

In this as in other matters, one is under no obligation to tell a child all the truth one has in one's possession. Two questions must be answered; (1) whether or not a child would profit in any way through the impartation of such truth and (2) whether if I decide to wait and tell him later, irresponsible talk concerning it is not likely to reach him in a way that would be more disquieting than the same truths put as I might put them? If so, the vote would be all in favor of not waiting.

Taking the last question first, it appears highly improbable that an alert, intelligent boy or girl could grow to be fifteen or sixteen and not realize that men and women do not agree on some of these important New Testament matters. The second coming of Christ, the virgin birth and the physical resurrection are all being discussed in the newspapers. Accusations against some of our well-known leaders for their "un-sound" beliefs, protests against ministers or teachers holding their positions if they also hold these "dangerous" views, answering protests against those who insist that their own views are binding upon all, are bandied about. Is it not better to introduce boys and girls to the fact of differing opinions in the least harmful and most helpful way possible rather than leave them to become prejudiced partisans using

garbled data or to turn in disgust from the whole subject?

For the older ones, real gain may result from the recognition of our ignorances and our differences of opinion. Before turning to them, however, let us first note that (with the exception of the unusual child whose serious questionings ought always to be dealt with seriously) probably all that is necessary with young children by way of preparation for their initiation into these uncertainties later is to share with them one's own sense of the mysteries of life; to wonder together about the stars and the miracle of the springtime and the Heavenly Father's love; to give children the impression that we are all going to school together in the world; that even grown folks are learning and expect always to learn; that we are glad to keep learning more and more of the things that God knew we could find out for ourselves in course of time and therefore didn't tell us. Children love surprises and they respond to the idea that God has surprises in store for us. The thought of God's "secrets" that he doesn't mean to keep as secrets always, but just for awhile, pleases them as much as facts already learned.

With older children and young people much more can be unfolded that may be of positive worth. The following suggestions may be developed as fully as the intelligence and interest of pupils make desirable. It can be shown that we still "see as through a glass darkly," not only in religion but in every subject of human inquiry. Great mysteries confront the biologist, the physicist, the chemist, the astronomer. If a young person inclines to think everything settled in science, it is because he has dealt with only the very simplest part of each subject. It is also true that one is more conscious of unsettled problems in religion because the subject is more vast and comprehensive than arithmetic or geography. When these



pupils come to study philosophy they will find that subject is like religion in this respect. The "petty known, the unknown vast" should be emphasized not as a fact to regret, but something to be glad of. If we had learned all about God and his world by this time, that would be a cause for regret and we should long for new worlds of thought to conquer. It is the vastness of the universe which makes life challenging and interesting. Young people should not regard unsettled questions as annoying, but as luring us on in the quest, particularly as we know now so much more than we have yet been able to use. The likeness in this respect between religion and science can be brought out. We do not know very much about what electricity is, but meanwhile there is almost no end to the practical uses we can make of it; so, though we do not know in religion a great many things we should be glad to know, yet we know now a great deal more than we have yet put into practical use and can keep busy working on what we do know for a long time. After a discussion of unsettled problems a group can always be left with a sense of solid ground to stand on as far as the essentials of right living are concerned and with the realization that decision on some questions can wait for further light without halting our progress toward the Christian ideal. This is well expressed in a poem by Washington Gladden:

In the bitter waves of woe,  
Beaten and tossed about  
By the sullen winds that blow  
From the desolate shores of doubt,—

While the anchors that faith had cast  
Are dragging in the gale,  
I am quietly holding fast  
To the things that cannot fail:

I know that right is right;  
 That it is not good to lie;  
 That love is better than spite,  
 And a neighbor than a spy;

I know that passion needs  
 The leash of a sober mind;  
 I know that generous deeds  
 Some sure reward will find;

That the rulers must obey,  
 That the givers shall increase;  
 That duty lights the way  
 For the beautiful feet of Peace;—

In the darkest night of the year,  
 When the stars have all gone out,  
 That courage is better than fear,  
 That faith is better than doubt;

And fierce tho the fiends may fight,  
 And long tho the angels hide,  
 I know that Truth and Right  
 Have the universe on their side;

And that somewhere beyond the stars,  
 Is a Love that is better than fate;  
 When the night unlocks her bars  
 I shall see him and I will wait.

What shall be done about differences in opinion, whether between a parent and a teacher, the previous teacher and the present one, this and that minister or bishop or between the scholars whose books the older ones may read? How can we overcome the disquieting influence of the knowledge of such differences and make it inspiring?

In the first place, it is necessary to show that such decided disagreements are not confined to religion alone; that the same thing is true of almost every subject of

inquiry; that differences of opinion come to the front and are discussed more hotly in religion than in most subjects, partly because religion matters more to the ordinary man than does the composition of the atom or the question whether Mars is inhabited and partly because men for long held the mistaken idea that final and perfect truths had been made known to man in religion, which explains why there is more persistent clinging to older ideas in this than in other subjects.

It may be pointed out that however many the resulting difficulties, we have reason to be glad of our differences of opinion. Although we are sometimes disturbed by them, we must realize that we could all agree only if we were automatons. If our minds were little machines they might turn out a more nearly uniform product, but let us be thankful that we are individuals, even though we do differ as to the duty of the United States in her foreign relations, as to the tariff and as to many matters in religion. It is the most natural thing in the world that we human beings, with our highly developed minds, should disagree. If we were all beavers at work together upon a dam, we could build it without disputes, for we would do it by instinct, but in working together to build a world, it is better that we be men and women with individuality and the power of thought, even though that involves disagreements. The only really regrettable part of our religious disagreements is the unChrist-like way we unkindly judge others, or insist on agreement in ideas although the Master insisted only on the right spirit and right ways of living, or spend a disproportionate share of our energies in arguing about interpretations of certain phrases, to the neglect of the really important campaigns of religion in which all of us should be uniting.

Another difficult question that arises for us is the prob-

lem whether it is legitimate to impose our own opinions on our students or permit them to take our own theories as the truth, since so many whom we must respect differ from us. On the one hand there is the danger of dogmatism. We are eager to have children think for themselves and come to believe not necessarily what seems true to us, but what seems true to them. To be sure, that is a more difficult stand for a teacher of religion to take than for a teacher of any other subject. For what has helped him to weather his storms, he is sure will help some one else and the measure of his concern for some one else is likely to be the measure of his zeal in the effort to induce that one to take just the very sailing directions he has used himself. But, as Coe says in his "Social Theory of Religious Education," "To impose our beliefs on a child, even though the beliefs be utterly true, is not to promote the growth of a free personality; it may even be an invasion of personality; it may subject one individual to another instead of emancipating each and every one into full membership in a self-governing society, the democracy of God." He goes on to say that the teacher may come between the pupil's mind and the truth and stay there. "Even if we train the pupil to say sincerely that it is the Pope, the church or the Bible to which he submits, this say-so of his is our own handiwork, and we have no guarantee that the truth becomes his own possession." The "liberal" teacher, especially the young liberal whom life has not yet mellowed, needs this warning as much as does the conservative, for there is likely to be an impatience with any views but the ones which seem to the holder so utterly reasonable that it is "incomprehensible how any one in this day and age can think otherwise." A respect for his pupil's selfhood and a realization that there are many ways into life abundant must

therefore be urged on teachers of both schools of thought.

On the other hand, the danger from dogmatism is no more real than the danger from indecision, from a non-committal attitude which gives the devil and all others their due and sits pondering on the fence, watching the fight instead of engaging in it. In our effort not to be dogmatic, if we become hesitating and uncertain, we must remember that our pupils are likely to adopt the same attitude and that hesitations and uncertainties never impelled to action. There must be a ring of positiveness about a conviction if one is to stake much on it. The working out of this problem of just when one should suggest several lines of thought, leave the question open and expect the pupil to come to his own decision; just when on the other hand, one is justified in trying to build up in him a faith like one's own, with no ifs, ands or buts about it, is one of the things that makes the teaching of religion both difficult and fascinating. Each teacher must settle it for himself. If I were to make any suggestions, they would be these:

(1) One must discriminate between what is essential and what is of subordinate importance. A Christian may surely feel that he has every right to try his best to induce others to give their allegiance to the things which Jesus himself insisted were vital for all men.

(2) Part of the process of helping to establish another in a positive faith is to impart to him one's own deepest convictions. If one possesses a faith which is sunnily strong in its reliance on the great affirmations of Christianity, one should steadily share that faith with young people as well as the reasons for holding it. If one's life does not rest securely on such affirmations, I should go so far as to say that he may serve his country in other

ways, but he had better not try to teach its children in religion.

(3) Proper relegation of many debated questions to their place among the non-essentials will prevent the uncertainty which must attach to them from doing any harm. Here again the young college graduate needs an especial warning. Some of these questions may have interested him exceedingly, particularly if recent study has brought him different conclusions than those formerly held by him. He must be on his guard against assuming an equal interest on the part of his pupils in those particular problems. He must not make the mistake of assuming that correct information concerning what is being thought or might be thought on some of these points is of as much importance as developing in his pupils a sense of God or relating the great principles of the passage under consideration to the tangled problems of their everyday living. He must not be so engrossed in steering his machine away from the ditch of unreason or the tangled underbrush of antiquated thought that he forgets to give it oil and gas in the form of quickened emotions and strengthened will that alone will drive it ahead.

(4) None of the all too brief class hour should be used in discussing the kinds of moot points that center attention not on what is most, but on what is least important. The implications of the great undisputed truths of the lesson for individual and collective living often yield the richest results in spiritual development. But occasionally an invigorating discussion of debatable points may clear up the doubts of some of the more reserved in the group, who would not venture to voice their difficulties themselves, but who welcome and use the suggestions that come out in a general class discussion. If a teacher guides such a discussion wisely, the comparison and contrast of what can be

said on both sides of a question often develops in the pupils qualities difficult to encourage in any other way and just as important as the knowledge of the facts of any particular lesson. Coherence in setting forth one's own views; a searching inquiry into the reasons why one thinks as one does; ability to discuss a topic of real importance without rancor or bitterness; not to be "blown about by every wind of doctrine"; honestly to weigh the contributions of others; to see truth growing out of the meeting of several minds; to use a discussion as a chance to gain truth, not merely as a chance to advocate one's own particular theory; to respect the earnestness and intelligence of another, even if his mind handles a subject differently than does one's own mind; to penetrate beneath surface differences and diversity of opinion to the essential underlying agreements—all of this may be the product of a carefully guided discussion and all of this is greatly needed today.

Even in working with younger children, many passages may be treated as open to different interpretations. Miss Hetty Lee well says: "We teachers cannot help revealing to the children our own personal point of view. Our individual conception of the personality and teaching of Christ is bound to betray itself in any gospel story that we tell; it will escape in our tone of voice, expression of face, choice of phrase, in emphasis or omission. If we are honest, we shall frankly recognize this human element in our selves as story tellers; we shall find ourselves saying as we talk, 'I always think,' 'I fancy he meant,' 'I believe he looked,' 'Perhaps he,' 'It seems to me,' 'I imagine,' etc. Again, if we are wise we shall recognize the human element in the audience as well. Each of our children has the right, equally with the teacher, to understand and interpret the story in his own individual way. Our method of teaching should take account of this and

leave the child free. The correlative to the teacher's 'I think' is the teacher's question to the child, 'What do *you* think? How do *you* think it happened? What do *you* think he meant?' with an assurance somehow conveyed that the child is at perfect liberty to think differently from the teacher. I recollect the encouragement of being interrupted one day by a child with the remark, 'I don't think that at all; I think he . . .'<sup>1</sup>

A very successful teacher of the life of Christ to sixth grade pupils reports the following questions and answers from her notebook, all of the answers and some of the questions being in the children's own words: "What did it mean that a dove descended upon him?" "The dove was the voice of God." "Was there really a dove?" "No, it was a spirit." "I think it could really have been a dove." "The spirit of God speaks to us now in conscience." "God speaks to us and we speak to him through prayers." "God told Jesus in this way that he was pleased with him." "What is the importance of the dove?" "It does not matter whether a dove came or not." "It means that God was pleased with Jesus." "We can believe as we want to. Jesus felt that he was the Son of God and that was his work." Surely more is gained from this kind of discussion than would be the case if the teacher gave the class his own interpretation as final.

Another difficulty in teaching the New Testament is encountered when we discover that instances of this natural human tendency to differ in our ideas and in our interpretation of facts occur *even in the pages of the New Testament itself*. All the men who wrote those pages were doing their best, each in his own way, to interpret the greatest fact of all history, but their ways of interpreting that fact were as different as the men themselves. That

<sup>1</sup> *Present-Day Problems of Religious Education*, p. 29.



this is so must be evident to any one who reads even the New Testament with care, to say nothing of the scholar's books on the gospels, books which are very largely concerned with this one problem in all its ramifications, the problem, that is to say, of getting back of the reports concerning Jesus to Jesus himself in his own speech and person. We may wish there were no such problem. We may wish with all our hearts that we could trust every word as we would be able to if Jesus had written them himself; we may wish that no period of oral transmission, when stories grew and changed in the telling, intervened between his speech and person and ourselves, but all our wishing will not make it so. We are obliged to ask, Did Jesus really say this or really do that, or does this also include the way some early disciple construed something he did or said? Always we have to test it (aside from textual evidence) by what we are most sure of in his teachings and character and by what we know of the tendencies of thought among men of his time. Jesus was evidently willing to trust his priceless words to fallible human ears and minds and we must have confidence as he did, that the spirit of his life and teachings would be safely passed on (as the scholars assure us that it has been) and we must not let trouble over the various differences in detail divert our attention from the task of making that spirit effective.

With the children, particularly the younger ones, the difficulty largely solves itself, as it often does, by the selection for their use of that material only which one considers reliable. When the older children notice the slight differences in the accounts of events in the gospels, as they are quite sure to if they read with attention, the explanation that the records are not just alike because different men wrote these stories and wrote them some

years after the death of Jesus, will be accepted very simply and naturally. Some additional information about the author and the chief concerns of each of the gospels will only add to the interest of the study. The children can understand also that the accounts we have are very incomplete and that often the men who were with Jesus were slow to comprehend him. "How is it that ye do not yet understand?" he would perhaps say to us as well as to the men of his time, if he should find us assuming that the reporting of his words and deeds was altogether complete and correct. The children may be asked if they think such an account as that of the cursing of the figtree (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-21) can have been correctly reported; which is more reasonable, to suppose that some one misunderstood and misstated the facts or to suppose that Jesus actually cursed a figtree because he found no fruit on it out of season? An interesting experiment with a group of children is reported by Miss Hetty Lee: "I was taking the story of the Gadarene demoniac a little while ago with a keen class of ten-year-olds, after myself reading the very suggestive treatment of it given in 'Letters from an Unknown Disciple.' The children told me of themselves during the lesson that we should not now call such a one 'A man with an unclean spirit,' but 'wild,' 'mad,' 'a lunatic.' One child called him 'wicked,' but this was ruled out by others in the class. As we went on reading the verses, some of the children suggested that it was the spirit of 'fear,' 'fright,' that made the herd of swine run down into the sea—they caught it from each other'—'one ran and then the others'—'Perhaps they were afraid of the wild man throwing himself about'—but the children were unanimous in their belief that it was *not* Our Lord who sent the 'unclean spirit' into the herd, maintaining stoutly that he loved the swine and knew that they were creatures

made by God. When challenged as to how it came to be written down that Our Lord 'gave leave' to the unclean spirits to enter the swine, the children became rather keen over puzzling out *who told the story first*. St. Mark, they said, was not there. Most appeared to think it was a disciple who told the tale, probably St. Peter (whose boat was in use) and that he 'perhaps was not near enough to hear' or 'didn't remember very well,' or 'made a mistake.' They were splendidly sure all the way through, it was evident to see, of Our Lord's victorious fearlessness and perfect love."<sup>2</sup> Surely this method is productive of more loyalty to the master and a keener realization of the essential traits of his character than an unquestioning acceptance of every detail.

Such preparation in earlier years will make easier an understanding later on of some of the more difficult problems, for example, the Fourth Gospel. What shall we as teachers do with a book of such priceless value to mankind because of the profound religious experience embodied in it; because of its unerring sense for the undying truths which found expression in the personality of Christ and for the reality of his spiritual presence in the hearts of men—and yet a book which is so exceedingly difficult to teach? Difficult because, compared with the first three gospels it is very different, different in most of its incidents and teachings, in its idea of the order of events and most strikingly different in the kind of impression of Christ which it conveys. Difficult also because really to understand these differences, one must take into consideration what the author was trying to do, that is to make the Christian religion acceptable to Gentiles in the complex Graeco-Roman world of his time; to men trained in those strange "mystery religions" of the East and familiar with

<sup>2</sup> *Present-Day Problems in Religious Education*, p. 32.

Greek philosophy; to men trained in the Hellenistic Judaism which was quite unlike the simple Old Testament Judaism; to men familiar with the peculiar terminology which we find in the writings of Philo. He was trying to answer their criticisms of the Church and of the Christian religion and to win them over to it, so that they too might know "the riches of Christ." For his purpose, he realized that the gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke were inadequate; when the men he had in mind read them they were not impressed; he must adjust, relate, re-express the life of Jesus in metaphysical and theological terms to which these men were accustomed. A good deal of knowledge of this rather complicated background is required, it is obvious, if we would fully understand his re-expression.

Another difficulty arises from the allegorical method which the author of John uses; sometimes it sounds like allegory, as in the teaching about the vine and the branches, but sometimes it does not, as in the turning of the water into wine, when it is meant so nevertheless. The fact is that he chooses what sounds like simple historical incidents to present what he does not mean at all to be accounts of the deeds of him who "went about doing good," but to be symbols of eternal truths. This makes it hard for us, who are not used to the allegorical method, to get what the author meant us to get and what the men he wrote for, did get, from his writing. Not all his incidents are pure allegory, however; scholars also tell us that he uses some good historical material as well and gives some information that the synoptists do not give us concerning what Jesus actually said and did in Palestine. But how shall what is history be separated from what is allegory? The scholars are still working on the problem and there is little finality yet in the results of their labor. In study-

ing John what we should aim at chiefly is not to sift out more facts of history to put with what we gain from the synoptists, but to garner the truths of John's great message. We must take the gospel for what it is, rather than for another gospel like the first three, which it certainly is not.

Still another element of difficulty arises from the way the author of John begins to report words of Christ and then changes to his own reflections about Christ without indicating where the one leaves off and the other begins. The vocabulary of the long speeches of Christ is so different from the vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount and so like that of the author of the Fourth Gospel that it makes us sure that often he is giving us in that form some of the truths about Christ which have become clear to him rather than reporting the words of Jesus. The words of Christ in the Synoptic parables are more in the nature of reports and these more in the nature of interpretations, and one has to adjust oneself to that change in the Gospel of John. One has to be ready to value truth as truth, and to recognize that part of the revelation Christ came to bring could perhaps be better expressed by a responsive human heart than by Jesus' own lips.

It will readily be seen from the foregoing (and the experience of many justifies the statement) that the kind of truth found in the Fourth Gospel is not easily apprehended by children. The kind of message it brings is heard by the heart that hungers for the eternal, the abiding, the universal Christ, and that is not the child heart. Most teachers agree that study should be confined to the synoptic gospels through all the early years. The older children can be told that John was written later and will be studied later, that it is more like a portrait than a photograph, that it is very beautiful and they will enjoy

studying it when they are older. Then when they do come to it, in later adolescence, it will impress them with all the force of a new revelation.

Exceptions of two kinds may be made to the above statement: (1) Fragments of narrative, like part of the story of the woman at the well and the man at the pool of Bethesda and the attempt of the people to make Jesus king, can be taken from their Johannine setting and used to supplement the synoptic narrative, if told with the synoptic vocabulary. This has been successfully done in George A. Barton's "Jesus of Nazareth," where he very skilfully extracts a possible historical kernel without taking over the characteristic Johannine point of view.

(2) The other exception may well be given in the words of Rev. J. Morgan Jones, who has written an excellent chapter on the teaching of the Fourth Gospel in his "New Testament in Modern Education." "There is one feature of the Fourth Gospel that seems to lend itself naturally to our use in the earlier stages of religious education. There is no literature which shows such a capacity to crystallize some of the most important features of Christianity into a brief, striking and almost proverbial form of words. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'; 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work'. . . God is a Spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' Such sayings as these . . . are unforgettable, universal summaries of the life and spirit of Jesus and . . . have their necessary place in the process of instruction. By their means a whole series of incidents or aspects of truth can be indelibly impressed upon the mind if transmitted at the appropriate time after their

content has already been concretely pictured. They can fruitfully be employed in connection with the synoptic narratives as summaries of their moral and spiritual meaning. Filled with a synoptic content, given beforehand, they will be fixed in the memory and become part of the treasure of life."

If in the Junior Department it is felt wise to give some idea of the character of each book in the Bible, as is sometimes done in drills or in brief survey courses, an excellent way of stating in elementary fashion some of the truths about the book of John, from the point of view of modern scholarship will be found in Harold Hunting's "Story of our Bible." But any really satisfactory study of it must be of the book as a whole and must be carefully prepared for in advance. It is extremely misleading to insert whole sections just as they stand from John in a study based on the first three gospels and to try to interpret them in the same way. The public recognition of Jesus as the Messiah at the very beginning of his ministry, and his arguments with the Jews to prove that he is the Messiah are examples of such departures from what we learn in the synoptic gospels. John is great enough to deserve to be studied rightly and if so done it can be made most rewarding.

Another difficult New Testament problem is created by the presence of the gospel material in which Jesus speaks of the end of the world and his own second coming, the so-called "eschatological" material. This is an immense subject, which would need nothing less than a book if it were to be presented at all adequately.<sup>3</sup> With young children the subject need hardly come up at all; the apocalyptic material is not connected with the incidents and teachings

<sup>3</sup> A brief summary of different theories with some suggestions for teachers is given in Appendix II.

most used for them. Emphasis on the aim of Jesus and on the characteristics of citizens of the Kingdom can be brought out by use of parts of the gospels that do not raise the "eschatological problem" at all. With the older pupils one can teach according to one's convictions or can throw the problem open for discussion. The latter method is the only fair one for mature and intelligent students, but the former might be wiser with the younger ones. Difficult and perplexing as the subject is, it is not one that can be avoided today.

Just one word more as to the advisability of using material whose authenticity is questioned by a large number of careful scholars. In a recent conference for teachers of Church Schools, the question was put, "Is it legitimate to use Christ's command, 'Go ye, therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you,' as an appeal for missionary work, when many scholars unite in saying that he never spoke these words?" Perhaps the test question to ask in such cases is, "Are the words true to the spirit of Christ as we have come to understand it through the use of material of which there is no doubt?" If they are "true to him, though not true of him" and convey the idea in a more pregnant and persuasive form than other words, it is wise to use them and there is generally no need of stating that he may not have said them. Many would be willing to use the above passage for its missionary interest who would never think of using the same verse as an argument that Christ insisted on the use of the Trinitarian formula in baptism. They would hold that that is not supported by the reliable material and is dubious for many reasons. The same might be said of the famous verse in Matthew,



"On this rock will I build my church." The proof text method is in disrepute today anyway. The things of which we are most sure are supported by far stronger evidence than any one verse. To use a verse to *illustrate* a truth or to *express* a truth is very different from using a verse to *prove* a truth. It is always a shaky building that rests only on the foundation of a sentence or a phrase.

## CHAPTER X

### THE UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

It may be wise, before beginning the separate studies of the miracles of Jesus, the Infancy stories and the Resurrection, to consider the more general problem of the kind of a conception of the Master that our age seems to be tending toward and to ask about the effects on young people of different sorts of teaching concerning him. Every teacher of the New Testament will recognize the importance of the problem and every one knows the responsibility of presenting that life as the one who lived it would like to have it presented. To give a true impression of Jesus Christ to those who are just taking up the gift and the task of life—how dare one attempt it?

Of my temerity,  
Jesus, assail me.

But somehow or other it must be done. Each must "paint the thing as he sees it." To me it might be summarized in the following way: Jesus has been so great a figure and has had so great a hold on men's lives because he has satisfied men's needs in three ways chiefly: (1) He has answered their questions about God and men. (2) Men's emotions have been stirred and satisfied by him, and emotions are as hungry as the intellect. (3) Men's wills have been enlisted by him in a worthwhile task; the problem of what a man is to do with his life has been solved by him. These fundamental needs last through the

centuries. But the particular questions which men ask and the methods which must be used in answering them differ. The kind of appeal that will rouse the emotions and the experience that will satisfy them changes. The understanding of the great purpose being worked out here and therefore the way in which each individual life can contribute to this purpose changes. Therefore one would expect that the way in which Jesus becomes a reality to men and the way in which they express their loyalty to him would differ in different periods.

Roughly speaking, since the time of Christ, there have been two great ages, the medieval and the modern. During the centuries between the time when Jesus made his own first fresh impression on men's minds and the modern period, the questions which Jesus answered for men were as to the mysteries of the relation between God and men and the way in which man, corrupt by nature, could be transformed into the different and holy nature of God. The answers that were given to these questions, the way in which it was thought that Christ was related to both God and man, the way in which he entered into the scheme of salvation, need not be recalled here. Suffice it to say that when answers to these questions were given by the church, the questioners accepted them without the kind of challenge which the modern mind gives to the speculations of others. The answers *were* speculations based on a few facts that were assumed to be correctly reported and on the scientific and philosophical ideas of the time. There was no historical inquiry, in our sense of the term, for the modern historical method had not yet been developed. It is well known that through all the centuries from the writing of the gospel of John down to the latter part of the eighteenth century, there were no lives of Christ written. There were harmonies of the gospels,

there were poetical treatments and passion plays but attention was centered not on the way Jesus lived or on what he said while on earth, but on the necessity that God should enter a human life, on the way that it was accomplished, and the resulting benefits to men. Questions on these subjects were answered so as to satisfy hearts as well as intellects. When men were oppressed by the thought of their sinful nature and its impending doom, a flame of devotion was kindled in them by the thought of the mediator between God and men who saved from sin and death and who was graciously pleased to impart his life to men through the sacraments and offices of the church. The satisfactions to be gained from complete surrender to a greater than oneself were found by those who gave themselves up to meditation and to charities. Some saintly characters were thus produced. For the rank and file of men, however, every day deeds were probably influenced but little directly by the example or personality of him whose hope it was to transform the whole of life.

The Renaissance, gradually releasing man from the thought of his inherently sinful nature; the Protestant Reformation, gradually accustoming men to the idea of release from external authority (though for long the *basis* of authority was all that was shifted); the scientific spirit which entered into historical inquiry and drove men to a study of the sources and to humility before the facts; the social movement with its passion for improving the conditions of life, all contributed (and are still contributing) to the shaping of a world in which the needs of men are different and therefore the way in which Jesus Christ meets those needs must be different. In carrying out the demand of our age for reliable facts, years of exacting labor have revealed to us far more about the real Jesus,

the man of Nazareth as he lived among men, than any century except the first ever knew. Through study of the Judaism of the time and the relations of Jews with Romans and through the careful comparative study of the gospels themselves, we have had made clearer to us the setting of the Master's life, the problems and difficulties which he faced, the victories he won and the powerful impression he made on his countrymen. The result of this new understanding of him is for many an experience somewhat akin to that which men of the first century knew. The force and beauty of his character, the charm of his personality are again drawing men to him in whole-souled devotion and claiming their lives for his purposes. We still must ponder over his relation to God and to men, but the tendency is to try to express this relation in terms natural to us twentieth century men and women, intelligible to us because part of our working vocabulary, rather than to use the Messiah or Logos phraseology of the first centuries or the "One substance with God," "Second Person of the Trinity" language of the fourth century. Satisfactory formal statements are hard to word. We recognize the difficulty of putting any adequate explanation of our own ordinary personality into words and the difficulty of fathoming the mystery of such a personality as his is much greater. Some of us are quite content, after all, to waive explanations, since we are sure of him.

If this is true for many of us older ones, how is it with those who are still in their teens, and early twenties, "the youth of the world, who are the hope of the world"? Let us begin with those who should provide our spiritual leaders a few years hence, the students who throng our colleges. As a rule, they have little knowledge of the modern historical study of the gospels, when they come to us. Many of them do have a familiarity with the

stories and main teachings and a sense of reverence for and interest in the person of Jesus. They realize that much which is vital in religion centers here and a certain group is inclined to connect that vitality with the divinity of Christ, as manifested in the "supernatural" elements in the gospels. Some of them dread to have whatever conception they hold disturbed by any new ideas and others are genuinely eager for more light. Very few have any controlling sense of devotion to the character or principles of Jesus. He means something to many; he means a great deal to a few.

What is the effect upon them of study along modern lines? Some have little serious intellectual or spiritual concern of any sort, a few are thrown into confusion, at least temporarily, and for a while think that they have lost their faith. Most of this group come to realize that what they have lost was more or less external, not wrought out of their own experience. They work their way into a religion of their own which, if simpler, is more genuine and permanent. With others the results may be more disastrous. The large majority, however, when they become acquainted with modern methods of study of the gospels, find themselves in sympathy with them. As far as the conclusions reached from such study are concerned, naturally they are many and various. For large groups at least, there is no such element of disturbance as there is for many of their elders in the minimizing of the supernatural, or, to go still farther back, no such hard and fast distinction between the natural and the supernatural. That they welcome a conception of Jesus which gives them a clearer sense of him as a man among men is indubitable. "Divinest when thou art most man," expresses the feeling of the majority as well as a single phrase could. The response to this conception on the

part of those who had been quite uninterested before is very genuine; they rejoice to find such a living character where before was only a distant, halo-girt figure. As illustration, here is a statement from one whom the traditional conception had left quite cold: "Up until a very short while ago, I frankly saw nothing reasonable and not so very much that was helpful in Jesus. How could there be anything reasonable about a being who was so far detached from us, that stars moved and angels descended to earth for him? It was all most unreasonable and fantastic. I had a detached, semi-alooof air toward Christ, mingled with a sort of amazement at the rest of the world. I was feeling as I would have, had that world told me to love and worship the dryads of the trees. My twentieth century matter-of-factness was the dominating influence in my life. Then to my astonishment I found that not every one believed Christ to be divine in the old sense. Upon hearing this I considered him with renewed interest. If he was human, he was teaching us from his own experience. He could sympathize with us because he was flesh and blood and not a divine oracle who, from his stores of supreme knowledge, uttered words of wisdom. He has become a new Christ to me, this time an utterly reasonable and to-be-loved Christ. He is the connecting link between God and man, not because he is half human and half divine, but because his mind is big enough to comprehend the ways of God and small enough to sympathize with the lowest sinner. If he was human and attained God, we too can strive to attain him. By planting our feet firmly on the ladder of Christ's teachings and love, we have the surest, safest and happiest approach to God." Here is another typical statement made after a college course in the life of Christ, by a different type of student, one carefully reared in the

older traditions, who had responded to and been satisfied with the point of view given her: "Although I have realized gradually that my whole religious outlook was changing, I did not realize how great was the change until recently. It was not so long ago that I thought Christianity depended upon belief in the virgin birth and the physical resurrection. I was always in fear of arguing these questions with any one, for I thought that my faith might be shaken. This was before I started to study the New Testament, but as soon as I came in contact with the love of Jesus, how trivial and unimportant all of these things seemed. I had all the time been obscuring the beauty of the character and of the teachings of Jesus by the cloud of my stubborn and unreasoning prejudices. Now I have a faith in the power and love of Jesus Christ which is based not upon the interpretation of some verse of Scripture, but upon the realization of how he lived and thought and loved. . . . I go out from this study with a greater desire to follow the plan of life of the Christ, a life based on all those principles for which he stood, and with a broader, more tolerant view of religion."

What conclusions shall we draw if such statements are truly representative of the reactions of large numbers of our young people? Not necessarily, it seems to me, that the traditional conceptions are wrong, not that they should not be taught at all to our boys and girls, but that the *emphasis should not be put on what is called the "supernatural" element* and that the miracles, virgin birth and physical resurrection should not be used as essential *proofs* that Christ is divine. What will really win the enduring love and loyalty of the largest number of the young today is acquaintance with a Master who met the problems and difficulties which his life brought him supremely well and in both his life and teaching set forth



principles which have stood the test of centuries and which promise to lead us out of the strife, agony and confusion of our world today. That view of the Master does not forbid a belief in the virgin birth and physical resurrection but it does insist that the emphasis must be on personality and principles, not on miracles. The word which I should like to leave with parents and teachers after studying the life of Christ with hundreds of college students is, "Teach what you will of miracles, but present that winning and compelling personality *earlier in life than we have a chance to in colleges*. It is often too late after the college age has been reached; very often apathy and indifference cannot then be broken down."

Turning now from college students who are, perhaps, a specially selected group, to "all sorts and conditions of men" composing the army during the war, it is interesting to note that their chaplains reached somewhat similar conclusions to those stated above. The chaplains agree that "So far as men think of Christ, it is with feelings of respect, but to great numbers he is only a dim figure of the past, far removed from their present interests and needs." Their conclusion is, "Surely we need most of all to present the historical figure of Jesus Christ in all his fulness as the Son of Man." Rev. A. Herbert Gray says: "They have never seen the real Jesus. Our preaching and our corporate living have not availed to set him forth. . . . Our whole task is to show men the real Jesus. Already he is a Master after their own hearts if they did but know it. He does embody all the qualities in which they already believe. If they could but see and know him many might be found casting off for his sake the poor and unworthy things that are now in their lives. . . . The real Jesus was a man after the heart of every true man. . . . We must recover him in the glory of his magnificent, robust

humanity ere we can expect to find full-blooded men gathering to his feet. . . . We are going to lose the young of both sexes unless we can recover the real Jesus. . . . If we can help men to see him, not our doctrines about him, but the Master himself, we shall have done all that we can do. . . . They would draw to a Master who asked much of them and had himself risked everything. They are ready for the stormy seas and the untrodden paths. They make splendid pagans today and would make splendid Christians tomorrow, if they but knew the real Jesus. . . . What I am pleading for is that the church should offer men a clear and simple presentation of the religion of Jesus, divorced from all theological subtleties. The faith by which men live is, as a matter of fact, always a simple faith. . . . The average man lives life effectively and happily in spite of the metaphysical mysteries which surround him. His business is life, not philosophy. He can dare to suffer and endure to great purpose even though he does not understand. And he is ready for a simple religion, expressed in the words he commonly uses. He does not want to understand personality, but he is ready to live and die for a person. . . . The essential hunger of men's hearts is not a hunger to understand the metaphysical nature of God. A diet of such words as infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, eternal, immanent and so forth, leaves him hungry still. What his soul cries out for is light on the disposition of God toward man and that light Christ gave in words no man can misunderstand. Can we not present to men the God Christ revealed and leave the ultimate mysteries to the theologian and the philosopher? That God is the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son and also the austere leader who cries, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross,' that God

loaths sin and yet is able to love sinners, that he waits now to welcome sinners and lead them through a life of brave, happy and exhausting service—that surely is the great good news. And that good news thousands are ready to welcome who are now unhappily involved in the mystifications which we have allowed to cluster round the figure of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup>

Some, agreeing entirely with this point of view, will say, “But this is the conception we do give in all our best Sunday-school lessons nowadays.” It is true that there has been a great improvement, but the first Sunday-school lesson on Christ that I chanced on when looking over our best series to see how he was being presented to the younger generation today, dealt with “The Person and Work of Christ” for Intermediate pupils (twelve to fifteen years of age). The emphasis was on the Trinity, the Only-begotten Son of God, his pre-existence, his humbling himself to become man, his difference from all others, “for his birth had been foretold in the Scriptures.” The teacher was told to “Press home the fact that he, a perfect man, died in the sinner’s place, the just for the unjust.” “He died to make us right with God; he paid the debt of sin for us. He is our Lamb, furnished by God himself to make atonement for our sins.” The teacher was asked to “Contrast Christ’s lowly birth, in weakness and in humble life, with his second coming in power and glory to judge the world.” “Facing the judgment will help them to realize their need of his salvation. Have they made their Judge their Saviour also?” The material provided for the pupil is right in line with this, in question and statements.

Even those who think that these ways of expressing the greatness of Christ have eternal validity, should recog-

<sup>1</sup> *As Tommy Sees Us.*

nize that it is not good pedagogy to begin with them. If we are too eager to give children our best and give it before they are ready for it, the only result is to make the figure of Christ a strange and vague one who is not at home in the world in which they live, and possibly to make the experience out of which such expressions might naturally grow in course of time, forever impossible. Many teachers are realizing the mistake we often make. Miss Hetty Lee in "Present-Day Problems in Religious Education" says, "The teacher's habit of forcing upon young children a too early generalization in verbal form of their religious experience is responsible for much slipshod thinking and later reaction. I recollect on one occasion hearing an Infant Day School teacher follow up her story of the feeding of the five thousand with such an attempt at formulation as the following: 'Why could our Lord feed those hungry people?' she asked. 'Because he loved them,' 'Because he was good,' 'Because he was kind,' were the various answers eagerly proffered. 'No,' was the teacher's answer to each attempt and at last she was driven to the confession of despair. 'That's not what I mean. Why could our Lord feed those hungry people? At length by some suggesting and urging she obtained the answer she wanted, 'Because he was God.' 'Yes,' she said with relief. 'Our Lord could feed those hungry people *because he was God*. Say it after me,' and the children obediently gave themselves up to repetition. Yet the children were quite right; the Spirit of Truth was speaking in their hearts, as their answers clearly showed. The word 'God' to them at this stage of their development was merely a proper name, probably associated solely with the Heavenly Father and not with Jesus Christ. 'Divinity' to them had already become revealed in the only understandable terms of Kindness and Love. The teacher had

discouraged a child's search for truth and his expression of it when found, and she had not done anything to awaken a real understanding of our Lord's divinity." Again, "Attempts at formularizing religious ideas before the time are bound to defeat their own ends, and a thoughtful child will express his sense of confusion. 'You *said* Jesus was God,' stoutly maintained a six-year-old to his teacher, 'and you *said* Jesus was praying to God in that picture. Wasn't he praying to himself?'"

There is general agreement (and many lessons prepared for children are carrying this out) that the way in which the personality of Jesus can be made of greatest appeal to little children is not by talking of Jesus' divinity as the only Son of God, but by emphasizing the baby Jesus and his mother's tender care of him and by telling the stories of the man Jesus that bring out his kindness to everybody (especially his love and kindness to children); telling of him as the one who cared when people were sick or hungry and helped them; who was never too tired to help, or too much in a hurry to help; the one who told us about our good Heavenly Father and made people glad wherever he was; who went at last himself to the heavenly home, where we shall all join him. That is within the realm of things which the child can in some measure comprehend and his genuine affection goes out to this man, who was the best man who ever lived and the most loved. There is no need of calling him anything but Jesus or Jesus Christ. If other terms, such as Lord or Saviour are used, they should be merely as titles, with no attempt to explain their significance, for any such conception as the bearer of the world's sin takes Jesus out of the child's world at once. Phrases like the Redeemer of the world and the Only-Begotten Son of God are even more to be avoided. Miss Lee says,

"Who is Jesus?" is a regrettably frequent question addressed to children to their entire mystification. 'Jesus is Jesus' was answered on a particular occasion by a perplexed little scholar, in terms truer than he knew."

For the older children the way in which Jesus met all kinds of every-day difficulties and tasks with joyousness and good will, never with any "pay-back" spirit; his loyalty to his Father's will; his sincerity and truthfulness, even though it got him into trouble; his courage and persistence under hard conditions, will win their honest admiration and kindle a desire to imitate him. Rev. J. Morgan Jones says in his "New Testament in Modern Education," "There can be little hesitation as to the dominant notes that should ring through the story of Jesus in the ear and soul of boyhood. They are heroism and courage, the spirit of adventure and the spirit of joy. It ought also to be clear that our picture of Jesus for this period should be frankly and thoroughly human, full of genuine human experiences. . . . This by no means excludes the growth of a wider and deeper appreciation of Jesus later on. It is the necessary foundation and preparation for them."

The hero-worshipping adolescent can gain for Jesus a devotion that will lead naturally into a resolve to stand by and work with him forever, if he is presented in a way that relates him to the natural interests of these years. We should stress Jesus' need for friends and his faithfulness to them; his lack of support in his home circle and home town; the way in which no slights or misunderstandings were allowed to depress or discourage him; the quick sympathy with others who were in need; the necessity of escape at times from the crowd to be alone with the God who was so real to him; the love of beauty in nature and in men's hearts; the way in which he found

a great task where many would have lived a limited and petty existence; the way in which he "carried on" though at tragic cost to himself; the vision which he had of great realities which sustained him through his contact with the sordid and ignoble; the way in which he lived up to his ideals in meeting his temptations, doubts and difficult problems (which should be frankly recognized); his power of making a few of the most important things central in a busy life and yet keeping in the circumference the many little things that make a life normal and happy (instead of renouncing them as John the Baptist did); his radiance, his charm, his power over men and women, his abiding presence after he conquered death. Then in later adolescence, the manhood of the master can be presented somewhat as Fosdick does in his fine little book by that name and more thorough historical study can be planned for those who can profit by it.

There is one group who are exceedingly dubious about the results of such teaching as has been suggested, a group not bound to orthodoxy, but convinced that the imaginative, mystical, sacramental, poetic approach to the great fact of Christ is the one which yields surest results to men. Their conviction is that the appeal to faith is greater if one takes the New Testament as a "perfect whole," in the attitude of acceptance, trust and adoration, and that it is weakened by the scrutiny of the intellect, the critical search for sources, the dispassionate weighing of evidence, and the rationalizing of the miracle element. This group fears that if the historical method of study is followed in dealing with the new Testament, it will result in a devitalized faith, a medley of discordant voices each shouting its own theory, a disproportionate emphasis on external facts, a set of maxims which one prosaically sets oneself to follow, and a conception of Jesus of Nazareth, which will

rank him with other great leaders, rather than distinguish him as the Christ of God, incomparable, unfathomable.

With full appreciation of the values which this group desire to conserve and with no disposition to discount the dangers involved in the point of view they oppose, I am yet convinced that for this generation, the dangers in the historical method of study are less than the danger of a sense of unreality in a Christ who moves amidst wonders, and of insincerity "in believing what you like to believe without finding out whether it's so." It may well be that the pendulum of the Christianity of our day is swinging too far in one direction, but the danger is that in trying to hold the pendulum, one may stop the clock. If we can keep the clock going by winding it with the key that fits at present, we can be sure the pendulum will swing back again. The figure is not entirely a happy one, but perhaps the point is plain. If Christianity can be kept full of life, it will be sure to redress the balance and cure itself of any undue emphasis, as time proves that such recovery is necessary. Meanwhile the matter-of-factness of the class-room may well be tempered with the spirit of worship of the sanctuary, where we take time to "inwardly digest" what we "read, mark, and learn," when poring over books.

A teacher who is conscious of the temptations of the critical approach can guard against them by keeping the sense of wonder alive in countless ways, by reminders that all religion (as well as all reason) is based ultimately on faith, by showing that study of the life of Jesus gives us ever richer meanings to pour into the sacraments and creeds, and that ancient ceremonies and statements of faith are, if taken as symbols, pliable servants of the higher life of man. While our children are hearing



stories of Jesus told in their own vocabulary, which make him a friend and guide to them in their everyday lives, they should also be gaining through the hymns and prayers and ceremonies of the church an impression (vague at first, but real) of deeper meanings of the same Jesus to grown-ups and to men of the past. The way should thus be opened to the mystical, the poetical, the imaginative, the sacramental apprehension of truth to all the class in part and in fuller measure to members whose temperament makes it the natural and right way into the life of the spirit for them. Some such there will always be to sound the note least often heard and therefore much needed in a prosaic, practical age. Teachers must do their best to minister to the needs of that precious minority as well as to the larger group who manifest the spirit which is "typical" of the time.

I cannot leave this subject without a few words in regard to our young people's use of the term "Divinity of Christ." A great many of the older generation are very sensitive on this point and there is often dismay on their part when they learn that some of their church-trained young people are asserting that they no longer believe in the divinity of Christ. Sometimes such an assertion is thought to indicate a more serious condition than it actually does. It proved very illuminating to ask a class of a hundred college Juniors to answer in writing the question, "Would you or would you not say that you believe in the divinity of Jesus? Explain just what you mean by that term as you use it." The majority said, "Yes, I do believe in the divinity of Jesus, meaning that he . . .," but the large minority who began, "No, I do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, but I do think that he . . ." continued with exactly the same sort of statement, often with the very words used by those who had prefaced

their remarks with the positive answer. In other words, in many instances, the very same conception of Jesus was held by those who said they did not believe in his divinity, as by those who said they did. So it is evident that one learns very little about a person's idea of or relation to Jesus by the bare, unexplained statement of belief or disbelief in his divinity. The term divinity is one that has had a long history and that naturally meant something very different when the thought of God was of a transcendent deity reigning in the heavens, removed from the world and man because between himself and them there was a difference in nature, than it means to a twentieth century thinker with his conception of an immanent deity who is revealed in all that is, revealed most adequately in the least limited forms of life, therefore revealed most fully in Jesus Christ. Need it cause us any anxiety if there be some who feel that they can use the term with these new meanings and others who think it is so closely associated with earlier conceptions that it only confuses their thinking to use it at all? Jesus' own method with men is most instructive. He let men live with him and come to know him well. He never insisted on the use of any particular phrases, but they came to use of him all the highest phrases that were natural to their time, to express what he meant to them. They did not all use the same terms. Paul did not use John's expression, "The Word" and none of them used of Jesus the phrase he apparently used most frequently of himself, "Son of Man." So why may not our young people use expressions which are natural to them? If only we could realize that not the expression, but the *experience* is what counts, the relationship with Christ into which they enter and the results as shown in the way in which they live. If they make his principles their own, let his spirit live and grow within them, if they believe

that his way of life is the way of life for the world and try with steadfast loyalty to make his dream for the world come true, are they not showing in the way which is most convincing that Christ for them is divine? And if they are not living in this way, of what avail is assertion of belief in his divinity and repetition of creeds and catechisms? To quote again from Bishop Lawrence:<sup>2</sup> "The future as I see it is going to bring to the Church fresh problems and battles, intellectual and spiritual. . . . What I, a man of over threescore years and ten, do plead for from my contemporaries and the men and women of middle age is that they trust the younger generation to meet these problems in their own way."

O Man of the far away ages,  
O Man of the far away land,  
More art thou than all of the sages,  
More art thou than creed or command.  
To crown thee we need but to know thee;  
We need but to live thee to prove;  
Nor time nor decay can o'erthrow thee—  
Humanity's ultimate love!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Fifty Years*, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup> Author not known.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MIRACLES OF JESUS' MINISTRY

THE miracles of Jesus' ministry present some difficulties, but they constitute too prominent an element in the gospel accounts to be passed over in silence in favor of the teachings and "natural" incidents. If our main purpose in teaching the gospels is that children and young people may catch the spirit of the Master so that it may mold their lives, then we must ask how we can make our study of the miracle stories serve this end. We must try to present Christ's personality to them in such a way that it shall be an abiding possession, not to be lost in course of time because it was tied to some untenable interpretation of the miracle stories. One teacher writes, "I teach that either Christ was divine and the miracles are possible or else there were no miracles and the whole thing is a hoax." How many pupils do come to think that "the whole thing is a hoax" through just such teaching!

How then, shall we use the miracle stories? They present, in the eyes of many, a somewhat different problem from that of the Old Testament miracles, because of their connection with the great central figure of Christianity. Many take the ground, in dealing with the New, even if not with the Old Testament, that we know very little of the world in which we live, that spirit and matter are more closely related than we are wont to think and that in the gospels we are confronted by an individual so remarkable

that he could control spirit and matter in a way which seems to us now in our ignorance to violate natural laws. But others who recognize clearly the force of all the above arguments, still believe that we have learned much that may contribute to the explanation of the New Testament miracle accounts and that such explanations are valuable not only in the interests of truth, but because the personality of the Master makes an even greater appeal in this light.

Many boys and girls at the age of twelve or fourteen are ready and eager for such explanations, which can be taken up more or less thoroughly, according to the capacity of the class, the time that can be given to the subject and the books that are available. If they become familiar with them at this period, the risk of serious doubt and alienation that might come later can often be minimized.

It may be well to prepare for work on the miracle stories of the gospels in the same way as suggested in the chapter on Old Testament miracles, by a study of the background of men's thinking in the time when the accounts were written, emphasizing the difference in their whole mental temper and outlook from that of ours today. The teacher may recall the fact that there had been no advance over Old Testament days in men's knowledge of natural processes, that they still lived mentally and geographically in a small world. They peopled the seen world with unseen spirits, who were responsible directly and often mischievously for events that we assign to quite other causes. Indeed, belief in such demons and spirits was far more prevalent than in Old Testament times. It was still true that men loved marvels, that stories grew in the telling, that when they were passed along by word of mouth, as the gospel stories were for thirty to fifty years before being written, there was a tendency to heighten the mir-

aculous element. Naturally these stories centered about their most remarkable men. There was a general feeling that a man was honored by having miracle stories told of him. All this is true not only of men in Palestine in Bible times, but of most men everywhere down through the seventeenth century, until the modern age of enlightenment began. "If later ages" so one might explain, "come to doubt some of these stories, they do not mean to say that the man about whom those stories were told was not great, but that there had to be substantial greatness in the man or such stories would never have been told about him. Even if we had lived in those days you and I would not have had miracle stories told about us, but Lincoln would and Jane Addams would.

"However, men of the first century did not think that ability to work wonders always proved a man good or his ideas true. Some of the opponents of Jesus said his cures showed that he was possessed by the devil. (Mk. 3:22) When one stops to think of it, how could ability to do strange things in the world of nature or to other men prove *goodness*? It could prove cleverness or skill or access to a supernatural power, but that might not be a *good* power. To be sure, the kind of stories told of a great man often show that his fellowmen were impressed by his goodness, but they had other reasons for thinking him good than the marvels he could work." Prof. George A. Barton says in his "Jesus of Nazareth," "We might marvel at the skill of an acrobat or the wonders that a man could perform with X-rays, radium, electricity, or some other element as yet undiscovered and yet not be convinced by these marvels that he was a good, pure man, kind to his family, honest in business or the kind of man one would like to have his daughter marry. Spiritual and ethical truth are really independent of physical miracles and

always have been. Such truth is spiritually discerned. When men believe in miracles, an account of a marvel prepares their minds to receive spiritual truth, for such belief helps them to the worshipful state of mind in which spiritual truth may be seen. For modern men the worshipful state of mind is more often produced by other means." <sup>1</sup>

Above all, the teacher must be sure that he gives his pupils this sense of the comparative unimportance of the miraculous deeds of Jesus in the face of the great wonder of his personality. Bishop Lawrence in his "Fifty Years" states this truth in a way that will interest young people. "I have to say frankly that many events that I used to think miraculous, or what were called supernatural, I cannot so esteem now. The incident may be just as wondrous, if the story reveals a fresh phase of the life of Jesus. I still believe that there are events at present inexplicable under any theory of our present knowledge of nature's laws; miraculous we may call them. Whether soon or in the distant future, or ever, they will be revealed to us as part of the workings of nature as men may then know, it is of little moment to me. The life and character of God as revealed in his Son Jesus Christ cannot be hidden nor his leadership of the sons of men lost." <sup>2</sup> If this approach to them is discussed and understood the student is free to work over the miracle stories without any sense that there are great issues at stake. He can consider explanations of different kinds as interesting theories, but his faith in Christ is secure entirely apart from them.

What are some of these explanations? Let us consider first the healing miracles, because they offer fewer diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 33, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 30, 31.

culties than the nature miracles. The following points, some of which the pupils can discover for themselves from study of the Bible, shed light on the problem: (1) Others than Jesus were performing cures during his life, though the success of none of them could be compared with his. (Mk. 9:38, Lk. 10:17, 11:19.)

(2) Jesus required faith as an essential element in the cure (except in the case of the demon-possessed, who were incapable of giving it). Some coöperation on the part of the patient was necessary. This was, we may assume, not an arbitrary requirement. It would look as though a magical gift was not given to Jesus which enabled him to cure others whenever he chose, but that it was dependent on the response he could evoke in others.

(3) Comparison with similar cures in other ages and in our own time makes it plain that all the cases cited in the gospels can be paralleled.<sup>a</sup> Jesus expected his followers to minister to men in this way (Mt. 10: 1, 8), and the wonder is, not that we have done so much, but that we have done so little. The recent revival of interest in the healing ministry of the church, combined with some growth in our understanding of the control of the body by the mind augur well for the future.

(4) Not enough information is given to enable us to know what kinds of blindness, deafness, etc., he was able to cure. It is possible that not all the cases brought to him would yield to his treatment. Contrast Mark 1:33, 34, "*All* the city was gathered . . . and he healed *many*," with the later account in Matthew, "They brought unto him *many* . . . and he healed *all*." The earlier statement is not so sweeping and leaves room for exceptions in cases of organic difficulties.

<sup>a</sup> See Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, p. 193, or F. M. Thompson, *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 40.



(5) A milder form of skin disease which yielded to cure was not then differentiated from the more dread disease of leprosy and was called by the same name.

(6) His own judgment subordinated the healing ministry in importance to his work of teaching, as shown in his repeated attempts to keep reports of healing from spreading. Such sayings as that in Mark 1:38, seem to indicate rather plainly that he thought of teaching as his main work.

None of the above need be thought of as detracting in any slightest degree from the reality of Jesus' power over men. If due stress is laid on the characteristics of Jesus revealed in the healing stories (his great sympathy and compassion for men, his quick insight and comprehension of the individual's needs, his own abounding joy and cheer, his poise and self control, which called forth love, trust, quick faith that he could surely help, eager yielding of self to his will), it will be evident that this view of the miracle stories brings home to us the fineness of his personality, as a belief that he was endowed with a magic gift never could.

*The Raisings From the Dead.* The only alternative to the belief that a stupendous miracle was performed, is, of course, that the diagnosis of death was a mistake, that a state of coma was in good faith called death. In support of this theory is (1) the fact that such mistakes sometimes occur even today, with our far greater medical knowledge; (2) Burials usually occur in the Orient within twenty-four hours of the time of death (applicable in the case of the widow of Nain); (3) It is not stated, in the case of Lazarus that processes of corruption had begun, but only that it was supposed that such would be the case. (That is, this may be another instance of coma.) (4) Jesus himself said (in the case of Jairus' daughter) that

the people mistook sleep for death. Such an explanation, if accepted, does not remove the wonder element from the stories, for the power of a will and a love that could reach and rouse a self so nearly across the line is something entirely beyond our comprehension.

*Cases of Demon Possession.* These can be handled as one group of the healing miracles. In addition to the suggestions above we need only note: (1) The different terms we should apply to the same maladies today; (2) the fact that such cases of nervous derangement are peculiarly susceptible to cure by faith; (3) Luke 11:24-26, may suggest a case where even the cure by Jesus was not permanently successful; (4) Mark 9:29 shows that Jesus had continually to fill up his reservoirs of strength through prayers, that his power was spiritual, not magical, and that he was "spending and being spent" in his efforts to help. Restoration to health was not an easy and cheap gift that he could hand to anyone on request.

The story of the Gadarene demoniac involves difficulties for some in the incident of the swine. Many like the suggestions given by the anonymous author of "By an Unknown Disciple", to the effect that the frightened swine stampeded to the edge of the cliff, lost their footing and fell into the sea. The superstitious keepers of the herd inferred that the demon from the cured man had entered the animals and when they asked Jesus about it he said sadly, "They were afraid; it was the same demon that possessed this man," meaning that both suffered from fear, but he was misunderstood and the story took its present form. This is only one of the instances where a willingness to recognize that there was some "unskilful reporting" and reading of others' ideas into the words or incidents, relieves us from the necessity of imputing to Jesus something that is unJesus-like.

*The Nature Miracles* present more difficulties. It is above all important to avoid dogmatism. Probably the best method is to present the chief alternate theories and let each pupil choose for himself what seems to him most reasonable. One kind of explanation seeks to find a basis for the story in:

(1) Some natural happening, which in the process of reporting among a wonder-loving people, was developed into a miracle (*e.g.*, in the feeding of five thousand, the sharing by each of whatever food he had with his neighbors, when generosity was appealed to, or, in the stilling of the storm, the coincidence of Jesus' words to his disciples, "Peace, be still," with the sudden abating of the wind).

(2) The influence of some Old Testament miracle story which stimulated the telling of a similar tale about the great New Testament hero (*e.g.*, in feeding five thousand, a likeness to the Elijah or Elisha stories in I Kings 17:8-16, or II Kings 4:42-44).

(3) Psychical experiences of some kind, visions or dreams (*e.g.*, in the disciples' impression that Jesus was walking on the water).

(4) The materializing of a parable or any symbolic teaching of Jesus into a concrete incident (*e.g.*, in the feeding of five thousand, Jesus might have talked about the bread of heaven of which there is always plenty for all who are hungry and which increases instead of diminishing the more widely it is distributed, thus accounting for the baskets left over. Those who heard of it afterward might then have supposed that Jesus multiplied actual bread. It is very evident that the miracle of the fig tree, Mark 11; 12-14, 20-23, grew out of the parable in Luke 13; 6-9).

(5) Ecclesiastical or theological or devotional needs

of the generation for whom the gospels were written (e.g., the feeding of the five thousand may be a story of the first celebration of the eucharist or the walking on the water may suggest that in stormy times of trouble Jesus comes into the boat of the church, the winds of opposition cease and all is well).

If any or all of these things were true, it would not prevent us from finding the historical Jesus in the stories as they stand, for each reflects his character, the memory of which men treasured. They were sure he was just such a man as would not be terrified in a storm, as would concern himself about even so simple a need as supper for a crowd of men, such a one as would be welcome at weddings as well as at funerals.

Possibly another fact about all these nature miracles ought to be made clear to pupils, for to many it seems exceedingly significant as evidence against the miraculous interpretation of any of the stories, the fact namely that in a passage the authenticity of which none doubt, Jesus so stoutly refuses to give a "sign" and appears deeply distressed that men should wish it. (Mark 8; 11-12.) Evidently the healings were not regarded as a sufficient sign or credentials by the Pharisees; something more amazing and unprecedented was wished, something, we may suppose, exactly in the nature of multiplying loaves and fish. If Jesus had just performed such a miracle (which is recorded as having preceded) why did he not refer to it instead of saying he would do no such thing? Only the "sign" of Jonah (Mt. 16; 4) should they have and Jonah worked no sign for the Ninevites, but merely preached to them. As always, with his emphasis on the spiritual (so many argue), he wanted men to realize the great significance and trustworthiness of spiritual evidence, to impress men's minds and wills and affections,

not their eyes and ears. He wanted to win their reasoned allegiance to his cause, not to startle them into accepting it. Of course if that be so, it is evident that his disciples did not fully get his point of view, for they told the stories of marvels as signs and they or their immediate successors were so impressed by the mere element of marvel that one story is related of him which many consider to be completely discredited by all we know of the character of Jesus. (Mk. 11:12-14.) That he should have been perturbed and petulant, even though it was quite unreasonable to expect figs when it was not the season for them, that he should have cursed the tree so that it withered away, is impossible for many to believe of him. The words of Jesus about the fig tree that bore no fruit in the parable in Luke 13; 6-9 and some passing reference possibly to a special tree that looked promising with its abundant leaves and yet was disappointing to a hungry traveler, perhaps resulted in the growth of the miracle story. As suggested in chapter ten, a class discussion as to whether this story probably gives us the real Jesus or a report of him by those who were "dull and slow of heart" will be more rewarding than the unquestioning acceptance of it as reliable.

The same tendency to over-emphasize mere marvels and to under-emphasize moral worth runs riot in the apocryphal gospels. Illustrations from these later writings (like that of Jesus when a boy turning a playmate at whom he was angry into a kid) may be given to show the tendency of the time and to point out that New Testament writers, though they did not yield to this often and in general are very reliable, yet do show some of the failings of their age. If we hesitate to admit that fact, how much more would we hesitate to admit that Jesus himself was *wholly* such as they pictured him!

The account of the Transfiguration seems to many to take its place with the miracle stories, though it is different from the stories we have been considering. Young people who honestly want to know how to think clearly about everything they read of the Master and who are puzzled by the story of garments becoming radiant and of Old Testament characters seen and heard by Peter and John, may find an excellent discussion of the incident in Barton's "Jesus of Nazareth"; while for younger children nothing could be better than the treatment in Rufus Jones' "The Boy Jesus and his Companions." Both these authors connect the Transfiguration with the revelation of the suffering Messiah which precedes and emphasize the triumphant spiritual mood in which the Master faced the terrible fact of suffering and death as well as the impression this made on the disciples.

Our attention has so far been given largely to the older children and young people. What shall we do with these miracle stories if we are teaching kindergarten or primary children? As in dealing with the Old Testament, our problem is, (1) to select the stories that express truths which the children can most fully profit by; (2) to tell (not read) the stories in such a way that the truth is most readily grasped. Since the problem of selection is one involving knowledge of the child world and child needs, it can not be fully dealt with here. Only a few examples of the kind of miracle story least well fitted to these early years will be given. It may be inferred from what has been said that the fig-tree miracle should be entirely omitted, as should the story of the coin in the fish's mouth, a story which probably misrepresents the true Jesus who refused to use his power to meet personal or petty needs. It seems likewise advisable to omit the incident of the Gadarene demoniac since it contains re-

pulsive details of disease and the superstitious element in the incident of the swine. Not many would question the account of Jesus walking on the water, but its value seems doubtful since it does not center attention on any characteristics of Jesus which cannot be brought out far more effectively in other stories and since it emphasizes power to do things which to the child seem magical, thus blurring the impression one wishes to have uppermost,—that of a very loving and helpful man. It may be said that Jesus was helping the disciples when he walked out to them, but one can hardly tell the story so the helpfulness will make as much of an impression as the ability to do the strange thing. Its strangeness is more striking to a child than a moving star or the multiplication of loaves or a resurrection from the dead, because it is something which the child himself can attempt and in which he fails. My five year old niece, who listens to other miracle stories with never a question, asked at once after hearing a long chapter from a book of Bible tales which included this incident, "How could any one walk on the water?" "Most people can't." "I mean, how could Jesus? I can only walk out up to my neck." Some weeks afterward on climbing into her tub she said, "I wish I could walk on the water the way Jesus could; see, I go right to the bottom." There had been no reference to it in the meantime and the story was read only once, but it had made a more marked impression on her than most stories of Jesus. The answer that was given to her question in this instance was, "Jesus was so wonderful that he could do anything." How could one answer such a young child, if one thought the story to have legendary elements? Perhaps, "Jesus was so wonderful that men thought he could do anything" would put the truth in a simple form and satisfy the child as well as the other statement.

The temptation to dwell on the mere fact of the miracle is not always avoided. Miss Lee reports that she visited a kindergarten class in which the story of the feeding of the five thousand was prepared for by asking the children to count up to five hundred, in order to impress upon them the magnitude of the miracle. As she says, "A teacher may succeed in emphasizing Christ's love of power rather than the power of his love, and the children may regard him with fear or envy." In telling this story to the five-year-old child above referred to, the emphasis was placed on the fact that Jesus was sorry the people were hungry, though the disciples were ready to let them walk the long distance to their homes with no supper. The miracle element was subordinated more than many would think necessary for this age by the statement: "They found a little boy who was ready to share his lunch, though he had only five small loaves of bread and a few little fish, but he gave it to Jesus and Jesus said a blessing over it in which he thanked God for the food and perhaps for the boy's generosity and then told the disciples to pass the bread and fish. Some say other people who had lunch with them became ashamed to keep it to themselves when they saw the little lad's unselfishness, so they passed what they had to their friends. Others say that Jesus made more bread and fish out of what the boy gave him, but anyway there was plenty for every one and not one went away hungry." The child referred to paid no attention to the suggestion that people differed in their explanation and no attention to the miracle involved in the second theory, but picked up the essential thought and went on at once of her own accord to tell how kind Jesus was to everybody. That thought she can always keep, whatever theory of the miracles she may come to hold.

A good many find that they can be sincere and at the



same time involve the child in no difficulties by throwing in such simple explanations as the above, even when telling these stories to young children. One teacher writes that she always says, "was thought dead," rather than "was dead," even with the primary child, and another teacher of seven-year-olds says, "I present the stories of Jesus' miracles with the purpose of contributing to the idea of Jesus' character. Once or twice in introducing stories I have said, 'This is a story somebody told about Jesus to show, . . .' but children's imagination easily jumps this hurdle and the story is just as real to them as other true or fairy stories."

Some like to tell children of the stilling of the storm in a way that brings out the essential truth which underlies the incident, the calm and self-control of Jesus at a time when others were distracted and afraid. This may be done by making Jesus address the disciples, instead of the waves and tell the men to be at peace. "When they ceased to be so afraid, the storm no longer seemed as bad and perhaps at that minute too the wind stopped blowing, as it often does stop on the Lake of Galilee and the disciples were ashamed that they had ever been so frightened and were glad they had had Jesus with them to teach them a better way." Dean Hodges' account of the first part of this story is an excellent illustration of the way in which spiritual truths can be brought out by retelling, and by emphasizing what is only inferred or too briefly stated in the Bible to impress itself on the child. After describing the storm and the cry for help he continues, "Who ever heard of any thing like that? A crew of fishermen who knew all about a boat and all about a storm, turned for assistance to a carpenter! Of what use is a carpenter in an open boat on a high sea? You remember that Jesus was brought up in a hill town, where the only

water was in the bottom of the village well. It is not likely that he had had any experience in boats. And the fishermen knew that. That is what makes it so remarkable that they should have called for help from him. It shows that they had already come to see that he was the wisest and the strongest and the best man they had ever known. They felt that only God could save them and that Jesus was very near to God." <sup>4</sup>

There is also the problem of the in-between age, the boys and girls who are no longer as credulous and undiscriminating as they were under eight years of age and not yet as interested in thorough-going explanations as they will be in their middle or later teens. Some think it best to omit at least the difficult nature miracles at this age; there are only three or four of them and they can easily be taught either earlier when there is less question or later when they can be more fully discussed. The healing miracles can be given with very simple explanations which bring them into line with similar happenings, chiefly those in our own day. In his book of New Testament stories entitled "When the King Came," Dean Hodges says, after telling of the healings in Capernaum, "Thus the busy day was ended amidst the thanks of grateful people, but there were many others like it. Day by day Jesus went about doing good. His heart was full of compassion and he was very sorry when he saw anybody in trouble. He was not the only person who was curing the sick by a word and a touch and casting out demons. Many ministers were doing that and many people have done the same since, even to this day. It has always been wonderful, this effect of a strong mind on a weak body. Even now the men of science do not understand it. It is among many strange facts, which nobody is able to explain. What we do under-

<sup>4</sup> *When The King Came*, p. 143.

stand is that our Lord was filled with the spirit of pity and mercy. The Son of God, who by his life and words, taught us about God was full of kindness and affection for the sons of men. That is the meaning of the miracles and it is more important than any miracle."

A suggestion as to a means of telling miracle stories to children of this age is given by Else and Otto Zurhellen in "Wie Erzählen wir den Kindern die Biblischen Geschichten?"<sup>5</sup> The purpose in view is to give the impression of slightly different stories of the same incident and of some exaggeration in the telling by weaving these facts into the narrative itself. Different individuals can be represented as discussing this great teacher, reports of whom have come to all. One person can say for example, that he heard that Jesus healed a blind man, Bartimæus, as he went out of Jericho (Mk. 10; 46ff.), and another that as he heard the story, it was when Jesus was entering the city (Lk. 18; 35ff), while still another can insist that it was *two* blind men who cried out, "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David," and it was in Galilee that it happened (Mt. 9; 27-31). But all can agree in their praise and joy that such a great healer is among them. Anyone who does not wish to emphasize such trivial differences, can still throw the whole story into the form of a joyful report to a newcomer who has not heard the news. Professor Jones says of this method, "Very effective use can undoubtedly be made of the more or less legendary narratives of the gospels by the modern teacher. Telling them on these lines he can preserve his own intellectual integrity and at the same time do justice to the child and the spirit of the gospels. His narrative will also remain within the region of historical probability—for it is almost certain that such stories were told of Jesus

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in J. M. Jones, *New Testament in Modern Education*.

within his own lifetime. Moreover such a method has the advantage of leaving the value and accuracy of such narratives a more or less open question for future discussion, while at the same time, it suggests a natural origin for legendary additions to the life of Jesus." <sup>6</sup>

Whatever method is used, the main thing after all is to tell the stories so that the uppermost impression left by them is the beauty of the character of the Christ. One would like to be able to teach the miracles in a way that would elicit a response of love and loyalty similar to that expressed in a little poem of which I do not know the author and which I may be quoting incorrectly:

O to be as Christ was  
 In sunny Galilee!  
 To suffer with each cripple  
 Till our love should make him straight!  
 O to be as Christ was  
 And die without the gate!  
 If only by our laboring  
 Some sufferer might be free  
 And turn to joy from sighing  
 In fields of Galilee!

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE INFANCY STORIES

MANY there are today who do not consider the stories of the infancy of Jesus (recorded in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke) strictly reliable history, but rather poetic and beautiful expressions of the high estimate in which Jesus of Nazareth was held by his early followers, expressions of love and homage wholly sincere and wholly natural for that generation with its Syrian background of custom, its Jewish background of religion, and its Gentile influences in thought. This does not diminish our belief in the incarnation, nor mean that we share any less in the high regard for the Master to which the stories bear witness, and which is felt by those who can still hold to the stories as history. As a recent writer on the virgin birth has said, "If, in the end, we must call poetry what they [of the first century] called fact, it will not be because we are strangers to their faith or fail to grasp the wonder of their love."

This point of view presents no difficulties to mature Christians, but it does raise problems for those same individuals as parents and teachers. "Dare I be honest about this?" is a question each teacher must face. "Knowing as I do that one of the important doctrines of the church is for many inextricably bound up with faith in these stories as literal fact, knowing how sacred all the associations are with those particular stories, knowing how

sensitive feeling is in regard to this matter, can I tell my class what I believe to be true without rousing a storm of opposition from parents, ministers and Sunday School superintendents? Would not more harm be done by presenting the apple of discord than by keeping it hidden? Again, suppose I waive the question of protest by others, what kind of explanation shall I present to the children themselves and at what age would such explanation be understood? Will it destroy the full beauty of these Christmas stories for children if I am truthful about them? Or, with a class of young people who have been brought up to accept these stories unquestioningly, can I (even supposing their elders do not interfere) help my pupils to fuller knowledge and encourage independent thinking in regard to those chapters, confident that the net result will not be a sense of loss? Or must there be some deprivation, which will be more than compensated for by the satisfaction of knowing the truth?" Another group of teachers who must puzzle over the matter too, are those who are convinced of the validity of these chapters, not on historical grounds, but because of theological considerations. They feel that thus and not otherwise it behooved the Christ to be born and the record of what would seem almost inevitable doctrinally is therefore accepted as it stands without question. But still they must recognize that many, the integrity of whose Christian faith and life cannot be doubted for a moment, take the position spoken of above, that the doctrine of the incarnation is entirely separable from the fact of the virgin birth. They can hold that these four chapters are legendary and still be as sure as mortal can be that Christ was the Son of God, the "chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely." If teaching is to be fruitful for other types of faith than the teacher's own, as it ought to be, this fact

cannot be ignored. The way must be left open so that as pupils grow older they may advance along either line of thought.

In teaching children one has always to try to build for the future. As Dr. William P. Merrill says in a most thoughtful article on "How Shall we Teach the Infancy Stories to our Children?"<sup>1</sup> "We must prepare them for the conditions of thought-life that will exist tomorrow. Our concern must be to give them that view of any matter which has the largest probability of permanence, the least possibility of being vitally affected by the progress of critical and historical investigation. One factor in the problem is the present attitude of the child mind toward religion, especially toward the supernatural. The training children receive every school day makes it less and less easy for them to accept the miraculous as credible. They will not believe in miracles unless they are shown that they are necessary and evidenced. I have in mind especially those in adolescent years, with whom the problem becomes most serious. A few years ago I had an interesting experience with a Sunday school class of boys, most of whom were in the early years of the high school. They were keenly interested in the study of the Bible, but they had a spirit almost hostile to the miraculous whenever it appeared. And their Sunday school teacher complained, with some justice, I thought, that the International Lessons just then seemed built on the principle of thrusting forward the miraculous as positively and baldly as possible. One boy in the class, from a Christian home, a Christian himself by every practical test, refused even to consider the matter of church membership because his mind revolted at the miraculous element in certain parts of the Bible. I learned afterward that the place where

<sup>1</sup> *Biblical World*, vol. 26, p. 438 ff.

he stumbled most painfully was over the virgin birth of Jesus. Some of us may deplore this rationalistic attitude of the child mind today, and others may welcome it as a prophecy of better things to come; but whatever our view of it, we must acknowledge its presence."

Rev. A. Herbert Gray agrees that this matter is often a stumbling block to the youth of today. He says, "To a chaplain dealing with men whose essential need it was to be led into moral surrender to Jesus . . . it was almost heartbreaking to find their minds involved in discussions about such points as the conflicting genealogies of Christ or the matter of the virgin birth. . . . What Jesus did to save the world was to reveal the Father, but the manner of his entrance into the world has no sort of relevance to that of revelation. It was long ago time that we put questions of that sort into their proper and unimportant place and took them out of the way of the stumbling feet of those who are seeking the Master."<sup>2</sup> One finds in teaching college students that many who have been taught to accept the virgin birth have not really done so. One says, "My family are all Fundamentalists and I have always been taught to believe in the virgin birth and the physical resurrection; *not that I did believe them* because I couldn't see how they could be true." Such statements should make the conservative teacher or parent who may not see any reason for changing his own mind on these matters, recognize nevertheless that there are many reasons why he should consider with care whether it is wise to continue to teach as he was taught.

The teacher of young children who knows of the eager interest all children take in the baby Jesus and how warm a response is called forth by the stories of shepherds and wise men, will realize the importance of using all his

<sup>2</sup> *As Tommy Sees Us*, p. 61.



sympathetic understanding of the child as well as his adult and scholarly opinions of Matthew's and Luke's early chapters if he is to handle them so that none of their value and beauty may be lost. Many will approve the words of Prof. Jones when he says, "Christmas is preëminently the season of childhood and the flowering time of the imagination . . . the time in the year when the child by right divine can claim to live in his own natural wonderland—peopled by Father Christmas and Santa Claus, by elves and sprites, by angels and the Christ-child. One of the dangers of modern times is to pluck the child out of that world too soon. The modern child is in danger of growing old and wise too early. One of the things we have to learn in moral and religious education is how to feed the imagination properly and effectively. The modern theological movement is in danger of making its keen sense of historical truthfulness for adults into a barren literalism for children. This does not mean that we must or shall tell the same stories in the same way as our fathers and mothers did, but it does mean that we must never let the opportunity of Christmas pass by without going through its open door into the wonderland beyond with the child's hand in our own. And in order to make the best use of the opportunity we must be very clear as to the end we have in view, the educational value of our material for that purpose and the most effective way of using it." <sup>3</sup>

Most teachers feel that there is no need before the age of eight or nine years, at least, for any explanations of these stories. The teacher's intellectual integrity is sufficiently safeguarded by calling them the Christmas stories, the beautiful, blessed Christmas stories, which show us how people have loved the Christ child for long, long years. But it is important in telling them (as in telling all really

<sup>3</sup> *The New Testament in Modern Education*, p. 205.

fine stories) to keep uppermost the deepest, truest meanings concerning which there is so much more general agreement than there can be as to historical value. Never should the children get the idea that these stories are "not true." What are the ideal elements that should be emphasized? Surely at least the following, to be restated in simpler form for young children and to be developed and enlarged for the older ones. In the messages of the angels to Zacharias, to Mary and to Joseph the longing that parents have for children who shall be "Great in the sight of the Lord" and help to do the Lord's work in the world, should be emphasized and the joy of their parents in the thought that their children may be of great service. Through all these stories as well as through the account of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist and the testimony of Simeon and Anna, there runs also the truth that the best things which God has to give can come only to those who are prepared to receive them. "The revelation of God in his Son came first to a select few, who were watching, praying, longing, for the fulfilment of God's promises: they were able to see the new light far earlier than the mass of people because they were in closer touch with the spirit of God. In the tale of the wise men and the star is the beautiful setting of the great truth that longing for new light was widespread, reaching into other lands than Palestine; that not only the chosen people, but the world at large, was ready in the providence of God for the coming of his Christ."

R. C. Gillie, in his "Story of Stories," after explaining how brilliant the stars are in the east and how men used to watch them and study their movements, continues in this way, "Sometimes they tried to guess something about great men's lives from the appearance of the stars at their birth. Many only wished to gain money and fame

by this knowledge, but some were nobler. They hungered to read truth and beauty and the meaning of life in the skies. Such were these strangers. When one night they saw what appeared to be a new star, it was put into their hearts that a king was to be born to the conquered Jews and that he was to be a world-wide blessing." He tells how they journeyed to Jerusalem. "Before them shone the bright star, seeming to lead them on their way and filling their hearts with joy . . . The star seemed to hang like a lamp above the spot where Jesus rested. To these men it was nothing that they found him in poverty, for they sought something greater than wealth."

The story of the angels and shepherds not only brings out the devotion of a different group, the men who were neither "wise" nor wealthy, just simple tenders of sheep, but also the sense of the import of the birth of Christ to all the world. The children can get the idea that the angels, who knew more than the shepherds of God's plans and God's truths, realized more than they the joy and blessing which the life beginning then in the manger would be to all mankind. So they sang their glad song over the Bethlehem plains. The idea of the significance of that life can always win a response whatever these children may later come to think of winged angels singing songs that mortal ears could hear.

There is not so much in the story of the flight into Egypt for children and some prefer to omit the tale of the cruel king and the death of the innocent babies entirely. Later it may perhaps be used as a suggestion of the fear of the good that is always in the heart of wrong.

What about the virgin birth story for children? Many have kept in later life a memory of their mystification at being told that Joseph was "not Jesus' real father." What kind of a father could a father be who was not a "real"

father? Miss Lee says, "It is almost unbelievable, but it is still possible in some schools to hear children being coached beforehand to answer the "catch" questions which the teacher knows will inevitably be put by some authorized visitor, "Who was our Lord's father?" after asking, "Who was his mother?" Many teachers and parents would agree most heartily with Dr. Merrill, whose advice is so sound and so well-considered that I quote from him at some length: "My answer to the question how we should teach this story to children is a very frank and positive one. I think we should ignore the subject wholly or very largely. I am decidedly of this opinion for the following reasons:

"1. Such a course is in harmony with the nature and needs of the child. Questions relating to sex must not be prematurely thrust upon the child's consciousness. To make much of the fact of the virgin birth is to emphasize a part of life of which the young child is rightly unconscious. There is a growing tendency to teach the child the facts of sex earlier and more directly than has been the custom. But this should be done with extreme care; and until it has been done, stress should not be laid on the story of the virgin birth of Jesus.

"2. To ignore this matter is in harmony with what we know of Mary's treatment of the subject. It is certain that few, if any, knew the story of the birth of Jesus until after his death. The gospel says that 'Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart.' Especially important is her word to the boy Jesus, 'Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing.' She does not hesitate to speak of Joseph as Jesus' father. The fact that the only incident that we have from the boyhood of Jesus shows us his mother ignoring the fact of the virgin birth, and that too, in the very gospel narrative which has most to say

of this fact, surely warrants us in adopting the same attitude when talking with children about the early years of our Master's life.

"3. This course is in harmony with the actual history of the growth of faith in the first disciples. There is not a trace anywhere in the gospel narrative that any one of the twelve, or any of the personal followers of Jesus ever heard about the virgin birth till long after they became his disciples. Why should we make important, and even fundamental, a matter which had no place in their development until they were far on in their Christian life? . . . If, in after years, the doctrine of the virgin birth seems essential to our children's full faith in him, they will be as ready to accept it as the early church was.

"4. This course of ignoring, largely or wholly, the virgin birth is in harmony with the right sense of the values of life. I mean this, that it emphasizes the moral and affectional side of life, rather than the physical, as the real basis of life, and of the home. If we teach the child that Joseph is a sort of outsider in the infancy narrative, we emphasize the physical basis of home life disproportionately, almost painfully. One solid foundation we should certainly seek to lay in the child's mind is that the real relationships of life are moral and spiritual, not merely physical; to teach him that is to safeguard his future home, as well as his own character. Which will best give this point of view to the child—to emphasize Jesus' relation to God on the basis of physical life, or on the basis of spiritual likeness and union with the Father? I do not see how there can be more than the one answer to such a question."

A story for children that very beautifully emphasizes the "moral and affectional side of life" is to be found in the introductory pages of Rufus Jones' delightful "Boy

Jesus and his Companions." He stresses the love of Mary and Joseph for each other and for the baby that came to them; the wonder, joy and thanksgiving that filled Mary's heart and the care taken of the child in the harsh surroundings of the stable. Another story that is very successful in emphasizing the permanent truths for even younger children is that of the annunciation to Mary, as given by Miss Frances Danielson.<sup>4</sup> She speaks of the sweet-faced Mary who loved the Heavenly Father. "That made her eyes shine and her lips smile. Sometimes she thought about the people in the little white houses who were unhappy or bad, and how much, how very much they needed some one to help them. Then Mary's eyes were sad and her lips did not smile. . . . While she thought about God she looked up. She was not alone. A wonderful, shiny being stood beside her. It was an angel. 'Hail, Mary,' the angel said. 'God loves you. Something wonderful will happen to you.' But Mary was afraid. 'Do not be afraid, Mary,' the angel said. 'God loves you. You shall have a son. You shall call his name Jesus. He shall be the great Helper, who shall come to help his people.' Mary said, 'How shall this be?' The angel said, 'God will give you the child.' 'O,' Mary said, 'O, to think that I am chosen—I so poor and young! To think that this wonderful thing shall happen to me!' When she looked up again, the light had faded. The angel had gone. She was left alone with this to think about—that she, Mary, was to be the mother of the child Jesus, who was coming to help people. Every morning after this, when the sun lighted up the world, Mary thought, 'I am to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, who is coming to bring help and happiness.' . . . And one day Mary sang a beautiful song to the Heavenly Father. She thanked him because he had

<sup>4</sup> Pilgrim International Graded Course for Beginners, 2d year.

chosen her to be the mother of the Lord Jesus, who was coming to bring help and happiness. For Mary knew that men and women and children, and you and I and every one would love Mary, because she was the mother of the little Lord Jesus. The days came and the days went, and at last the angel's promise came true. A baby boy was born on Christmas day. Mary, the mother, called his name Jesus. O, how Mary loved the child! And how she loved the Heavenly Father for his gift to her and to everyone in the world!"

Fuller information and interpretation can come some time in the adolescent years. It is perhaps wiser in later childhood not to stress these infancy stories in the study of the life of Christ. There is not usually the tender affection for the little Christ in the manger that we find in the earlier period and the deeper revelations of the meaning of that birth are yet to come with the fuller life of adolescence. They will come with more significance if there has been an interval of silence than if they had been gone over every year. Of course the service of worship in the Sunday School and in the church, the special Christmas pageants or miracle plays that many churches give now instead of the old-fashioned "entertainment" will all serve to keep the stories in mind. If however, there is to be some class study at Christmas time, it would seem advisable to select a special truth connected with the stories and emphasize that; for example, the Jewish expectation of a conquering warrior for a Messiah, instead of which came one to bring "peace on earth," showing us the strength of gentleness in the manner of his birth. If one of the older children asks a direct question about the reliability of these stories, an honest answer is inevitable, a negative answer is above all to be avoided, and a full answer is unnecessary. He can readily be made to see that a full ex-

planation would involve more detail than he would be interested in, until he is older. If he has been rightly trained throughout to appreciate the worth of poetry, there ought to be no difficulty in suggesting that that is the kind of truth we have here.

During the years of youth the Christmas story can take on a deeper significance. It can be recognized that we celebrate the birth of Christianity as well as of Christ and in a world torn by war and threatened by war, our young people can find challenge as well as reassurance in the angel's song of "peace on earth." The faith that can cling to that assurance in such times as ours is beautifully expressed in "A Ballad of the Wise Men" by Margaret Widdemer, where the question which many feel today as to how the angel's song can be true, is put into the mouth of Mary. The wise men say,

Now thou art come all wars shall cease,  
Thou who hast brought all strife release  
Even from East to West!

But Mary-Mother she veiled her head  
As if her great joys were lost:  
And, "Here is only a manger-bed,  
Then why do I hear clashed swords?" she said,  
"And why do I see a tide of red  
Over the whole world tossed?"  
*(But still over all the angels sang:*  
*"There shall be peace!" the high notes rang!)*

If there is time and interest enough for such thorough work, young people can be helped to compare the accounts in Matthew and Luke and to note the discrepancies and the difficulties that would arise in any attempt to combine the accounts. They can compare these first chapters with all the rest of these two gospels, with the other gospels



and with Paul and prove to themselves that there is not another scrap of evidence anywhere else in the New Testament for the virgin birth or any of the infancy stories; and that moreover there is a good deal which is incongruous and difficult to reconcile with the facts in these two chapters.<sup>5</sup> Inquiry will acquaint them with the difficulty of locating in history a census that would fit the requirements of the Lukan story and then they can consider how such stories as these in Matthew and Luke might have arisen if they are not actual occurrences. Explanations can be found in the Jewish desire to make events fulfil Old Testament prophecies (in some instances wrongly interpreted as in Mt. 2; 15 and 1; 22, 23), in the Jewish fondness for adding more of the story element for the sake of edification (particularly where the subject was interesting and the facts were few), and in such facts as Rihbany gives in his "Syrian Christ" concerning customs of that country. But the main stress should probably be laid on the fact that the greatness and wonder of Christ's personality and his uniquely close relation to God must be accounted for in some way. That various attempts at explanation were made by different thinkers is evident; some explained by genealogies which traced Jesus' descent from David; some by identifying him with the Messiah; some by the spirit which descended upon him at baptism; some by calling him the "Logos," the incarnate word of

<sup>5</sup> *E.g.*, Paul's statement that Jesus was "of the seed of David according to the flesh," Romans 1:3, and that Jesus was "born of a woman, born under the law" (probably meaning born normally), Galatians 4:4; the statement in John 1:45 and 6:42, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"; an early text of the gospel of Matthew which ends the genealogy in 1:16 with "Joseph . . . begat Jesus"; and the accounts of the descent of the spirit at the baptism which would seem to be superfluous if Jesus had been conceived of the Holy Spirit.

God, and apparently a little later some by a claim that his origin was part human, part divine. Not one of these explanations was applied to Jesus for the first time; they were all thought-categories of the age, that is, traditional ways of accounting for greatness which had been applied to other individuals before and were ready at hand, therefore, to be applied to him. The idea of the virgin birth was the most common way of explaining unusual greatness among the Greeks and Romans, whose thought was very influential in the early church. Heracles and Pythagoras and Alexander the Great were said to have been born of virgins with divine paternity, as was Buddha in India. Deification as well as incarnation was common; at death the Roman emperors were lifted up to divinity and worshipped. Passage between deity and men both ways was not at all unusual. The really significant thing is that men felt they must apply all these loftiest categories to Jesus. Each and every way of accounting for greatness must be utilized for him. If they asked, What origin can we think of that is worthy of such greatness? the stories which arose in explanation force us now to turn the question around and ask, What must have been the heights attained by the life to which such extraordinary origins were attributed? As some one has said, "They are trustworthy testimonies, not to the reality of certain incidents, but to the quality and the magnitude of Jesus' character."<sup>6</sup>

If information of this kind is to be given and this way of explaining the derivation of these accounts suggested (not as a finality, but as a possibility), it must certainly be accompanied by full discussion of the implications of such a view of the facts and such reasoning. The best

<sup>6</sup>The above discussion is too brief and inadequate to be at all satisfactory. Fuller treatments should be consulted.

way is to put the question frankly, Would there be any loss to Christianity if the stories proved to be not historical? If students say that it was possible for early Christians to get their sense of the greatness of Christ direct from him, independently of the angel's testimony and of the wise men's homage and of the virgin birth story, but that the case is different with us, who need such testimony in order that we may be convinced of his greatness, a little reflection will usually show to them the weakness of such a stand. A woman once said to me, "You talk about the love of Christ as an indication of the fullness of God in him, but that does not mean much to me; you love, I love, we all love, but the virgin birth is something so unique that it gives sure ground for thinking Christ to be different from us." How far we are from appreciating the spirit which dwelt in Christ if we must turn in that way to "signs and wonders" for our evidence! It would almost seem, if we grow to rely on it, that we would be better off with no virgin birth story at all, for then we would be forced to give full weight to the direct evidence of Christ's own personality and then recognition of his uniqueness would indicate a spirit enough like his own to appreciate him.

Always with the older group as with the younger, stress must be laid on the *truth* of the stories and the question of their value as legends or poetry or symbols must be discussed. Often the teacher can put a difficulty frankly and ask, "How would you answer this question? What would you say to a person who felt so and so?" thus bringing to light exactly the difficulty which some one in the class was feeling, but was not quite able or willing to express. For example, I ask my class what they would say to a student who said, as one did, "This study has spoiled my enjoyment of the Christmas church service.

Now when I hear these stories read, I think to myself, 'It isn't so; it never happened.' " The majority of the class are quick to see that the trouble is not with the changed view of the facts, but with an under-developed personality that is not able to respond imaginatively to truth expressed through a symbol. He who has cultivated his whole nature symmetrically, ought to be able to rise from his desk where he has been studying the first chapters of Luke with all his intellectual powers alert and impartial in the search for historical fact and go right from there to church, listen to the minister read "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night", and not find that his critical reasoning faculties interfere when another side of his nature comes to the front, taking delight in the exquisite story and musing on its deep significance to men. One ought to be able to "let oneself go" first in one direction, then in another, to give different powers in oneself their chance at different times. That does not mean at all the contradicting or denying of one set of qualities while cultivating the other; it is simply that we are too complex to be everything at one and the same minute. Whoever finds when singing, "O, little town of Bethlehem," that he is saying to himself, "Probably not Bethlehem, more probably Nazareth," ought not to rail at the scholars nor regret his acquaintance with them, but to read more poetry. If we should hear tomorrow that some ancient source had been discovered which proved beyond a doubt that we have reliable history in the infancy stories, would it make any difference to us *religiously*? Historically interesting it would be, but what iota could that discovery add to the religious truth which we now have?

Many of the church hymns help us out in our effort to

get away from the literal insistence on prosaic fact in the infancy stories. If when we sing

Still through the cloven skies they come  
With peaceful wings unfurled,  
And still their heavenly music floats  
O'er all the weary world,

we catch the spirit in the words that we are using, we are in a mood to appreciate, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying," and we should no more insist on taking the one than the other as a representation of external fact.

The whole of the hymn,

As with gladness men of old  
Did the guiding star behold;  
As with joy they hailed its light,  
Leading onward, beaming bright;  
So, most gracious Lord, may we,  
Evermore be led to Thee.

invites us into the realm of experience rather than of fact. "As they did, so may we" cannot be interpreted literally, but spiritual interpretation of it puts us in touch with living realities. When singing

And when earthly things are past,  
Bring our ransomed souls at last  
Where they need no star to guide,  
Where no clouds thy glory hide.

one would be slow of heart indeed if one did not recognize that we approximate God's ideal in proportion as we do not need to wait for earthly things to be past in order to be at home in that spirit world, "where we need no star to guide" and that the ones who must have an actual star if the story is not to turn to dust and ashes, have hardly set foot in the spirit country.

The result of my experience in teaching the infancy stories to hundreds of college students is that, given time to become acquainted with the literature on the subject, given entire freedom to make up their own minds, given a chance through class discussion to talk over their difficulties, the great majority find themselves convinced that we have not history in these chapters, but that we have a deeper truth than history can easily express. Not many young people are troubled in their own religious life by reaching this conclusion. What trouble there is comes when they try to fit this positive religious content into the doctrines and creeds of the church. "Thinking as I do, have I a right to be a member of the church? Should I repeat the creed?" are questions over which they puzzle along with their elders! The church rather than the class room will have to help them work that out. If the church comes to take the stand advocated by Bishop Lawrence in his "Fifty Years," that the faith must be distinguished from the forms in which the faith is expressed, that the faith is something too "deep, mystical, and vital" to be exactly or fully expressed and that therefore the creeds and rituals in which we attempt to express it must be either changed or re-interpreted as the generations pass, it will go far toward keeping our young people from feeling that there is a great gulf fixed between the church service and the modern scholar's library, and will therefore help to hold the more thoughtful of them in loyalty to the church.

The teacher of the average class of young people in the Church School has no opportunity naturally to go into the subject as thoroughly as is possible in college and must therefore consider whether a little knowledge would be a dangerous thing. We need more time for the religious education of our young people. How can we hope to do anything at all satisfactory when twenty minutes or half

an hour, with little preparation on the pupils' part may be all the time one is expected to use in a "lesson" on the birth of Christ? To insist on covering less ground and doing it more thoroughly may be the solution, until we can work out some scheme of weekday instruction. Probably the teacher, handicapped as most are at present, would do well to avoid hasty presentation of a few arguments against the historicity of the infancy stories. And yet if the class are even fairly intelligent, it would seem unwise to overlook entirely the doubt scholars entertain of the historical validity of these stories, for the opinions based on that doubt are widely known and much discussed today. One might simply state that there are reasons why a good many students of history are less sure that these stories are actual fact than they are of the manhood stories and then go ahead to consider whether it would affect our valuation of them at all if their legendary character should be proved, thus bringing out their real worth. Such a poem as the following, by an unknown author, might be of use in conveying this idea:

There was a baby born in Bethlehem.

I know they say

That this and that's in doubt, and, for the rest,

That learned men who surely should know best

Explain how myths crept in and follower's tales confused the  
truth.

I know—but anyway

There was a baby born in Bethlehem,

Who lived and grew and loved and healed and taught

And died, but not to me.

When Christmas comes, I see him still arise,

The gentle, the compassionate, the wise,

Wiping earth's tears away, stilling her strife,

Calling, "My path is Peace, My way is Life!



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES

THE resurrection stories are more difficult to deal with satisfactorily than are the infancy stories, because we find the same variation in the details of the accounts in the several gospels, the same difference of opinion among Christians as to the way in which the stories should be interpreted, the same question as to the relation of a great doctrine of the church to these particular historical statements. Then, as an added difficulty, at least for those who hold to a spiritual resurrection, it is harder than in the case of the infancy stories to explain so that children or young people can comprehend it, how these stories came to be written as they now are. It must be recognized also that to the early church and to many Christians of our day, the resurrection truths of Christ's victory over death (with the support that fact gives to faith in our own immortality) and the power of that great spirit to reach and influence the lives of men even when he no longer lived in the old familiar way among them, seem far more vital to Christianity than the question of how Jesus came into the world. It is likewise true that the teachings about the resurrection are woven into the rest of the New Testament material in a way in which the teachings about the infancy are not. All these considerations make it important that we find just the right way to teach these stories. To teach them without facing the historical dif-



ficulties or without opening the way to a spiritual interpretation may be to do some one a grave injustice and make any kind of faith in the resurrection impossible afterward. When and in what way, therefore, should one introduce critical questions and how can we use the stories so that they help build into consciousness at each age that part of the resurrection truth which a child of those years is capable of appreciating? How can the Easter stories be made to teach the Easter truth in such a way that it shall be an abiding possession, not vulnerable to the attacks to which the literalist position is exposed?

The Easter truth which can mean most to the youngest children is the wonder and joy of the way in which the best things last. This can be most successfully brought out through nature material, rather than Bible stories. One may study the way in which God keeps the seeds and roots alive through the cold winter, so that we have trees putting out leaves, grass growing green and flowers springing up when one might have thought if one looked around in December that it never would be possible. The Easter lilies and other flowers can symbolize the joy we feel in finding that God does not let the good things which spring and summer bring, be lost, but makes our pleasure in them all the greater by hiding them for a while. It is probably best not to tell the story of Jesus' crucifixion or the details of the burial and tomb to children under six or eight, for they make a deep and often an unfortunate impression on their sensitive minds. I knew a seven-year-old who could recall nothing of the stories she had heard about Jesus except that he was "full of nails" and another who insisted that he did not love God because God let Jesus be crucified. When reminded of all the good things we owe to God, he said, "Well, I'll love him for everything but that." Miss Lee writes that she has known more than one little

child inconsolable at night in bed because of the dread picture of horror presented by the story. "Often we teachers thoughtlessly carry our children back into the gloom of the first Good Friday, forgetful that Easter has made all the difference in the way in which we must view its happenings."<sup>1</sup> The story of the angel bringing the joyful message that Jesus was still alive may be used, for the mere fact of his death can be given with no stress on the manner of it. Some parents and teachers like to try to conceal the fact of death from children for as long as possible, but many wiser ones see that it is far better to prepare them for that from which one cannot guard them for long, and which may come at any time. It is not difficult to give children a beautiful conception of death. One does not have to teach them that life goes on, for that is something they feel instinctively; the difficult thing would be to give them any impression of ceasing to be. Some use "parables from nature" and tell of the caterpillar that must leave his old body before he can become a butterfly. One mother whose child asked, "Is it true that when we die, they put us in a hole in the ground?" showed her a babyhood dress that had been laid away, explained that it was too small and worn out to be used any more, so was put away in a drawer. "We didn't put *you* away; you had a new dress," so we put away the worn tired bodies in the ground, "but not *we*, we are alive forever more."<sup>2</sup> Again it can be explained that the only way God can make sick people well or old people strong is by means of what we call death. If we are telling of God as the Heavenly Father, we may well speak of life to come as the heavenly home, the most beautiful home we can imagine, though God keeps the secret of just what it will be like because he wants

<sup>1</sup> *Present-Day Problems in Religious Education*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, *opus. cit.*, p. 44.

to surprise us. They will then only find it a happy thought to be told that Jesus went to join his Father in the heavenly home and that an angel came to tell people the good news. Much of adult religion must wait to be shared with children until they reach maturity. This element, however, of faith in the continuing life of the real self and of joy in anticipation of all that the Father has waiting for us in the future, can be shared with even young children and it should be stressed at Easter time, though if it is to be a reality, it must of course be talked of far more frequently than once a year.

Perhaps the next step in the use of the Easter stories is to tell very simply the story of the crucifixion and burial, following this at once with one of the resurrection stories which emphasizes the truth of Christ's continuing presence with the disciples after death. The likeness of the risen Christ to the Jesus they had known before should be made evident to the children in his character rather than in his bodily form. The Lukan story of the appearance to the disciples while they were on the way to Emmaus is a very good one to use with children of the "in-between" age. One can make very real the group who were walking together, sad as they talked of him whom they loved, who had been taken from them, disappointed in the loss of all their hopes ("We *hoped* that it was he who should redeem Israel"). Then comes the transformation due to the Christ who walks and talks and blesses bread with them and teaches them as he so often had before, how to understand what was written in the Scriptures, especially how to think of suffering and of his own suffering. The gain to men through his death in that the risen Christ can come to all who need him is very simply brought out here. The story of the way in which the hearts of the men who loved him glowed as

they responded to his presence and felt again the blessing of his comradeship, which lifted them out of despair into courage and hope, is one that makes a great appeal and that brings out the essential point of the Easter message. It is better not to continue with the passage which follows in Luke and which lays stress on the "flesh and bones" of the risen body.

Another one of the resurrection stories which can be made to convey the Easter truth very convincingly to children is the one found in the twenty-first chapter of John. Rufus Jones handles this very successfully in his "Boy Jesus and his Companions." He says, "There is something in us which cannot die. Pilate's soldiers could nail the body of Jesus to the cross and make *it* die, but one thing these soldiers could not do; they could not kill the spirit of Jesus; nails and spears do not reach it, do not touch it. It was not killed when the body was killed; it was not shut up in the tomb where the body was laid away. God's world, my dear young friend, is very much bigger than this world which you see with your eyes and touch with your hands. The world we see is a kind of outside envelope around the true world, the real world, which lasts on, even when the outside covering breaks up and falls to pieces. Some of Jesus' friends discovered this and were able to see him and talk with him after he was crucified." He goes on to tell how some of the disciples went back to Galilee after the crucifixion. "They had gone home, but it did not seem like home any more. They were at home, but they were 'homesick' because Jesus was gone and he had come to be all their life and joy. Nothing looked the same; nothing felt the same. . . . The men tried to talk about what had happened, but they couldn't talk about it. Peter couldn't think of anything but the way he had gone back on Jesus,

his best friend, on that dreadful night in the High Priest's house and the way Jesus looked at him. He would walk away by himself and sit down all alone by the shore of the lake and say, 'O, I wish I could see him again, just once more. I want to tell him how sorry I am for what I did. I want to explain how I got frightened and said it before I stopped to think what it meant. I did love him. I do love him. I will always love him and I wish I could see him and tell him so.' Then the great, strong, sunburned man put his face down in his hands and wept like a little child. 'I wish I hadn't done it! I wish I hadn't done it!'" He tells how they decided to go fishing. "It will be better than nothing to catch fish; I can't catch anything else now." Then follows the story as in John 21 with Peter's chance to tell Jesus that he does love him, and Jesus' answer, "'Then it will be your business to go about looking after those who need help as a shepherd looks after his sheep.' Peter knew at once that Jesus trusted him and still believed in him and was going to use him in the great work of the world and he thrilled with joy. Once more he and his friends pulled the boat up on the shore and put it away in Zebedee's boathouse, with the oars and nets and he and the others went forth into the world with heroic spirit to work for Jesus." He concludes by telling how Peter met his death as a splendid hero, a "rock-man." Note how well he gives the surest truths of the resurrection stories, without stress on any risen body and without suggesting any difficulties of interpretation.

There is no need to use all the stories at this period, nor all the details in any story. The teacher can simply say that he is telling one of the stories of Easter morning. A story that many teachers have found unwise for this earlier age is that of the ascension. One says, "I would

specially omit the ascension story, as it gives an unhappy idea of a sudden withdrawing of Jesus' presence, due in no way to men's lessened spiritual ability to receive him." Miss Lee, from her wide experience writes, "The net effect of the story of the ascension is often to create a distance between the child and our Lord by sending him to a remote and physical heaven above the stars, rather than to bring to consciousness a Presence 'closer to us than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.'"

As the children grow older and are reading freely for themselves, more of the stories can be used. The pupils will probably notice the differences in the accounts in the gospels, as even an eight-year-old did. Her teacher says, "In telling the resurrection story, I used the word 'young man' at the tomb, as in Mark's account. A little girl eight years old spoke up, 'It says an angel!' I calmly agreed, 'Yes, in one place in the Bible it does say an angel and in this story it says a young man.'"

She might have added, "We do find some differences in the reports of the resurrection stories, just as we do in those of the earlier life of Christ but that is what we would expect, with several men writing the accounts some years after the events occurred. This doesn't trouble us, since they all tell the same important truths."

Even if one does not believe in the physical resurrection, it is probably better, as suggested above, to let the truth of the risen spirit of Christ come to children through the concrete stories which speak naturally of Jesus being seen and heard by the disciples. Mr. Raymont expresses the opinion of many when he says:<sup>2</sup> "Even on the supposition that a physical resurrection never happened, may it not be that a belief which has done so much for the race still has its part to play in the history of the individ-

<sup>2</sup> *Use of the Bible in the Education of the Young.*

ual soul? In seeking to impress upon a child the profound truth that Jesus lives, is it not natural to teach him in a way that he can comprehend that Jesus conquered death? To some of us adults and to some of the children too, by and by, the empty tomb may be but the expression of a spiritual fact. Meantime, is it not good psychology, even if it be perhaps only provisionally acceptable theology, to let the material conception do its work? . . . One may hold this strongly and yet quite consistently hold also that when the proper time arrives . . . the path of true wisdom lies in frank discussion of alternative forms of Christian belief."

However, one must be prepared for some discussion of the problem if it arises sooner than one had planned for it. One teacher thus taken by surprise, writes, "A member of my class asked the question, 'Do we know where Jesus is buried?' Another took up the question at once, '*Is buried?*' and the class brought themselves to a discussion of the physical or spiritual resurrection. I did not feel afterwards that I had met the opportunity as well as I might have." Some do not like to defer discussion of this matter until the adolescent age, particularly if they have in their class children who have had to face the fact of death in their own families. One teacher writes of two little girls who had lost their father and who were not getting much comfort out of the story of Jesus' empty tomb, since their father's body remained in his grave, but who responded eagerly to the idea that a spiritual resurrection had taken place in both cases.

It is not a very easy matter to explain the present form of the stories if one supposes that the body of Jesus remained in the tomb and his spirit, freed from any connection with the body it had formerly inhabited, held intercourse with the disciples. One might simply state, in

dealing with children, that the disciples had experiences that made them sure that Jesus lived and was present with them, but that we know very little about just what happened. The writers of these accounts tried to explain what had happened. They thought that if Jesus had risen, the grave must have been empty and told the stories in this way. We now see that that would not have been necessary and we have different ideas as to what might have happened, but we agree with Jesus' friends and the writers of the gospels in saying that the really important thing is that physical death is nothing final for the spirit.

In middle and later adolescence, more can be done along all these lines. Since young people are more capable than children of understanding how the glamor faded from the lives of the disciples as they felt that the great romance and inspiration of their lives had disappeared, the teacher must use all his skill in making vivid the process that went on in the minds of Jesus' followers as they passed from despair to a greater courage and faith and consequently to a greater effectiveness in work than they had ever known before. Perhaps it is well to try to re-live this experience with the disciples before coming to a discussion of the present form of the stories. Imagination can help a great deal, imagination based on the facts, as it is in the story for children from Rufus Jones' book given above and as it is for the older ones in the last chapter of the anonymous book, "By an Unknown Disciple."

When they turn to the Biblical material, they are sure to want to know how much is history. We must impress upon them that the transformation of the disciples from hesitancy, from dependence on the physical presence of Jesus and from discouragement when they thought that lost, to joyful and contagious faith, is a truth which is



most surely grounded in history. No sober student denies that Jesus so lived that he made his disciples absolutely sure that ignominious death could not conquer their Christ, who in spite of his crucifixion was going to carry on his great work for the world, a work in which he needed their help and to which they therefore devoted their lives with phenomenal success. All the history of the early church bears witness to this, as well as the accounts in the four gospels. Let us get the feet of our pupils well established on this rock foundation and then it ought not to be disturbing to them to realize that these men and women who were all sure that the connecting link between themselves and Jesus was not broken, grasped and expressed that fact in slightly different ways and that the ones who wrote down the accounts as we have them were somewhat influenced by the thought currents of their own time, as they tried some thirty or fifty years after the death of Jesus to give answers and explanations to those who wondered about or doubted the truth which the ardent first believers tried to pass on to them. It ought to be presented as a minor matter that the accounts of the details of the burial, the exact time when the women came to the tomb, just whom they saw there (a man, two men, an angel, two angels), just what message was given them and what they did afterward, how many appearances there were, to whom and where (whether in Jerusalem or Galilee or both) cannot now be determined with certainty. There are interesting conjectures, let it be added, as to just which elements in the stories are later strands in the tradition and which ones were part of the earliest accounts.

If the class has time and ability, such a book as Kirsopp Lake's "Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus" will furnish the teacher with much material that will

prove of interest in reconstructing the probable earliest story and in proffering explanations which might account for later developments. So far from regretting the fact that one cannot accept all the details as equally reliable, it will be found that many students experience a decided sense of relief when they learn that in the earliest account which has come down to us (that of Paul) there is no emphasis at all on the risen body, but on the impelling and controlling spiritual presence and that the farther one goes into careful study of the accounts the more sure it becomes that the empty grave played no part in *producing* belief in the resurrection. It was a natural *inference* for men of that time, for it is quite sure that the popular Jewish view of the period held that the body had to be resurrected if the spirit was to enter on immortality. It is possible also, that some incident such as the women coming to the wrong tomb and misinterpreting the remark of the young man who tried to correct their mistake ("He is not here; behold (pointing) the place where they laid him") supported what would have been a natural inference anyway and that the empty tomb came to be used as an argument to convince unbelievers of Christ's resurrection, whereas it had not been primary or necessary at all as proof to the first followers. The stress on the body which bore spear and nail marks and which ate broiled fish as an evidence of its reality may represent a still later line of thought. This is found only in the accounts of Luke and John and may be due to attempts to meet certain claims and arguments of disbelievers. A still later account in the apocryphal gospel of Peter, lacking the reserve of the canonical gospels, seeks to describe the first appearance of the body of Jesus as it left the tomb and is grotesque and unpleasing to a degree. The reason is clear for J. Morgan Jones' statement that "The

story of the empty tomb was after all only a dark and dangerous by-path even for the faith of the early disciples, while we are thankful that we need not travel that way at all in order to reach as strong a faith as theirs in the permanent value of the character, work and personality of Jesus and in his continued, full, personal life after death. The only reason for following this by-path at all in our religious instruction is that the contents of the New Testament demand it and that it enables us to illustrate the difficulties and weaknesses as well as the strength of the resurrection faith of early Christianity, and that it throws into more vivid contrast the reality underlying its temporal forms."<sup>4</sup> Again, "It is quite possible that, while sharing the faith of the first disciples, we may have to reject as mistaken and inadequate some of the reasons which they gave for holding that faith."

If the class is to discuss the relative merits of the theories of the physical and spiritual resurrection, it should be brought out that no one questions the power of God to re-animate the body of Jesus after death. How could anyone assert that God *could not* do this or anything else? The only question is whether we think he *did* do this, a question which can only be answered by weighing all the facts at command and coming to the conclusion which seems most reasonable. Certainly the earliest records and the explanations which can best be offered for the growth of the later accounts, give one, historically, many reasons (though not to all conclusive reasons) for doubting that the tomb was empty. How is it religiously? Can faith offer any imperative reasons for accepting the stories of the reanimated body? Here it certainly ought to be brought out clearly that while for many, faith in the victory of the spirit of Jesus over death is bound up with

<sup>4</sup>*The New Testament in Modern Education*, p. 223.

faith in the resurrected body, for others that is not so. For them, faith in the victory of the spirit of Jesus over death would be not aided, but even impeded by the necessity of accepting something which seems to them rather crudely materialistic and of supposing that a limitation like the revival of the body, which is not necessary for our own continuing existence, was necessary for Jesus. Faith can thrive just as well on the one supposition as on the other; that is proven by experience. Each group may wonder how the other group can think as they do; that need not trouble us as long as each one cordially recognizes the right of others to think differently and does not assert that the quality of the faith of others is not of as high an order as his own.

A question which should be brought up, even if no one in the class raises it (for it is sure to trouble some one), is the question how one who does not believe in the physical resurrection can find the stories and hymns which speak of the empty tomb, of value to him, as he hears them and takes part in them in the Easter services. Their worth as symbols, as suggestions, must be emphasized and the power of the self to respond emotionally to them as such must be cultivated (as was urged in the discussion of the infancy stories). The mind's decision that some of the statements are not historical need not be in any way affected by such an effort. We would be much to be pitied if, whatever opinion we hold historically, we could not sing

Neither might the gates of death  
Nor the tomb's dark portal  
Nor the watchers nor the seal  
Hold thee as a mortal,

with heartiness and in full accord with all that the hymn

is meant essentially to express, or if we could not read the Biblical accounts of the resurrection in the same spirit.

A question that is sure to come up is as to the way in which we may suppose that Jesus made himself known to the disciples if it was not by the use of his earthly and crucified body. Are we to think of vision experiences which were so real that those to whom they came mistook them for his physical form? Or are we to think that the spirit of Jesus entered a new "heavenly body" which was similar enough to the other to be well-nigh indistinguishable from it, but which had powers (such as that of suddenly appearing and disappearing) which the other had not had? Or are we to suppose that Jesus' spirit was able to act without a medium so powerfully upon his friends' spirits that they became perfectly sure they were in his presence? Afterward, were they unable to grasp or express the fact of that contact without saying that they saw and heard him? How can one be dogmatic about such a matter? We know so little yet about the way in which our minds work, we know so much less about the actual conditions of life and the powers of the spirit which has passed through the gates of death (and if we did know these things about ordinary spirits, we would still be far from knowing what might be possible to such a spirit as that of the Christ) that we may well be content to leave the spiritual resurrection enshrouded in that sense of mystery which breathes through the stories that presuppose a physical resurrection. Some adequate manifestation of himself Jesus was able to make. The results leave us in no doubt in regard to that. Beyond that we are in the realm of conjecture, conjecture which is interesting and may be rewarding, but which we are unable to resolve into positive and final doctrines. Some

will find all the above conjectures except the first, satisfying to faith since they all assume that the experience which came to the disciples was due to an initiative taken by the living spirit of Jesus and therefore may be said to be a sure indication of belief in the resurrection of Jesus. But what about the first, the "vision hypothesis"? Might such visions not have been due to the disciples' own minds working on their past experiences with Jesus and might they not, in that case, have taken place just the same even if death had conquered the spirit of Jesus? A good many discard the vision theory for just this reason; it does not adequately express the faith they have in the continuing life of Jesus and his power to make himself known to his disciples. Others assert that visions might have been the method Jesus chose to reveal himself by, and they find the theory in this way taking its place with the others. All we can do is to think it out as best we can for ourselves and allow the same latitude to others that our own minds must have if they are to do their best work. "Why should those who do not altogether agree about what no one can perfectly understand, feel bitter against each other?" When we come to put our chief emphasis where Paul and the followers of Jesus put it, on the fact that "The Lord lives," rather than on "The Lord was raised", we shall be able to enter into the fullness of their joy and cease to sully that radiance with our bickerings over what is after all unimportant. The spirit which one may well strive to cultivate in a class is that expressed in Richard le Gallienne's poem, "The Second Crucifixion":

Loud mockers in the roaring street  
 Say Christ is crucified again:  
 Twice pierced his gospel-bearing feet,  
 Twice broken his great heart in vain.

I hear and to myself I smile,  
For Christ talks with me all the while.

No angel now to roll the stone  
From off his unawaking sleep,  
In vain shall Mary watch alone,  
In vain the soldiers vigil keep.

Yet while they deem my Lord is dead  
My eyes are on his shining head.

Ah! never more shall Mary hear  
That voice exceeding sweet and low  
Within the garden calling clear:  
Her Lord is gone and she must go.

Yet all the while my Lord I meet  
In every London lane and street.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FIRM FOUNDATIONS

WE want to help the younger generation to get their feet on bed rock foundations, to help them to build up a religion in which God is the surest of realities. Is it possible to give them this sense of security without basing it on the older view of an infallible Bible? Is the ring of conviction, of certainty, that sounded through the assertions of our grandfathers something we must forfeit for the sake of other gains? Can a man who thinks along the newer lines be dead sure of God? What makes him so? Where is an authoritative warrant to be found if not in the Bible's every word? These questions express the hesitation felt by a good many who do not quite know whether to give their allegiance to the new point of view or not. Any single conclusion of scholars viewed by itself, is reasonable and does not affect the essentials of faith, but when you put them all together, have you as firm a foundation for faith as that which was laid down in the older view? Those who teach young people want to be able to answer such questions as competently as possible, for they may come up any minute; those who teach children need to think these questions out carefully for themselves, for though children do not as a rule make such inquiries, one wishes to be sure that one does give them that which will best prepare them to meet the doubts and problems which are sure to come later.



Suppose we begin with the child. A let-alone process is followed by some parents who are afraid lest otherwise they might give this individual entrusted to their care, teachings which he would later outgrow and reject. Many college students have said that that was the idea underlying their entire lack of religious training at home. Their parents in reaction against the strict and narrow theological training which had been their lot in their own childhood, had determined to leave *their* children free to do their own reasoning and develop their own religion after they arrived at years of discretion, in the hope that it would then be a reality to them. One can have only sympathy with such a hope, but only regret that such a method was followed when one considers the results. The earnest attempts of these young people of eighteen or twenty years of age to acquire that which they know means much to others and would to them if only they could get at its secret, their baffled sense of failure in being outside and not able to get inside, their wistful question, "Do you think it is too late?" all go to show that the method was a mistake. If religion were a set of carefully reasoned doctrines, then they might be selected by the discriminating mind when that mind had become mature and might then meet that individual's needs better than any set picked out for him by others could possibly do. But if religion is what the Master showed it to be, a life of conscious relationship to, and coöperation with, a great Father-Spirit, then it is as foolish to expect that it can be acquired late in life as it would be to keep a child from normal relations with his fellow human beings until he was eighteen and expect him then to choose his friends and enjoy them. Opinions can be changed later far more easily than a sense of the reality of God can be developed and a genuine religion

based on antiquated intellectual explanations is far better for a child than no religion at all.

What will best prepare a child to meet the questions which come up at maturity and make him most sure of God? Beyond a doubt that he be led into the realities of religion for himself just as far as his six or ten years and later his adolescence, make possible for him. That does not at all mean crowding adult realities upon him before he is ready for them, but it means believing that a genuine religion is possible for a child and studying the child sympathetically enough to understand how much of all the riches of Christianity he is capable of appropriating. Nothing in the world by way of argument can take the place of "I have felt," "I have found," "I have learned," "I have known." Without these, arguments avail little and on them every argument that counts for much must later depend. How to foster such a religious experience in a child is a problem (and not an easy one) in itself, a problem on which many books have been written, but which it is no purpose of mine to discuss. Suffice it to say that part of the process must be the sharing with children of a genuine religion of one's own, the letting them realize that religion contributes something very valuable and very necessary to the life of the grown-up people they love and trust. If they get that impression through the family group and the church group (and if possible through the school group as well), they will later have something to fall back on which is the next most essential thing to their own religious experience—namely the religious experience of others.

The effort should be to teach the Bible (or any other suitable literature) so that children gain a sense of the real contribution religion makes in the still wider group—the group of those who have gone before and left the testi-

mony of their experience as an inheritance to us. The way in which God met the needs of these men and women, the kind of life they were able to live because of their faith in God, the way they counted on God and the way he stood by them, the blessing and benefit which those who believed in God were able to bring to others, that is what is going to furnish (next to their own experience and the faith they have found in parents and friends) the surest kind of a prop, the most convincing kind of evidence later on when the whole thing is pondered.

This method is more difficult and requires far more expenditure of self for the sake of the children than the method of telling them simply, "the Bible says so," but it will have far more lasting results. If effort is made to give a child this full heritage, should *explanations* as to what makes us sure of God be included? My own answer is that it is best to give children under twelve no idea that arguments are necessary, to impress upon them that we are all sure. I should speak in unquestioning faith concerning the great foundation facts—God's love for us and his desire to have us live as Jesus Christ lived, for though no logic and no laboratory can offer final proof of them, there is nothing of which we are any more sure. Children's natural attitude is that of faith and acceptance of such facts as these, which nothing in their experience contradicts, and there is no gain in putting questions into their minds. If specific questions are asked, if, for example, a child says, "Are we sure there is a God?" the briefest kind of answer is usually sufficient; what he wants is assurance, not exposition or argument and the statement that we know God ourselves and that Jesus Christ knew him and we trust Jesus, may be sufficient.

Is there any danger, if we teach that the Old Testament stories are often mistaken in the conception which they give of God, that some children might argue that we may be making mistakes too and that we may all be mistaken even in thinking there is a God? It is possible, though such a line of argument would probably be rare, if beside the mistaken idea the teacher placed the right one that the Hebrews learned later or that Jesus taught us and if it were emphasized that the right one was the one we are sure of. But I cannot help recalling here an experience of my own childhood. I was told the stories of Norse and Greek mythology and was much interested in them, but also much troubled by the thought that these people believed many things about the gods which were not so and it might be that people in years to come would find out that we were just as much mistaken in believing in God as we now think they were in believing in Thor or Zeus. For some years (I should judge between the ages of ten and fourteen), these doubts recurred at intervals, making me miserable while they lasted. I distinctly recall saying to myself over and over while the *Te Deum* was being sung, "You think so, but you don't know." I considered asking my parents about it, but realized that if a Greek child had asked her mother whether there was a Zeus, she would have said, "Of course" and she would have been wrong, so how could I trust what my mother would tell me? I remember trying to get back a sense of the reality of religion by looking at the pictures in Bible story books, but what helped most was a verse of a hymn which I read many a night before going to bed,

Well I know thy trouble,  
O my servant true,  
Thou art very weary,  
I was weary too;

But that toil shall make thee  
Some day all mine own,  
And the end of sorrow  
Shall be near my throne.

That did bring some comfort, but the trouble was a very real one and lasted a long time. What made it seem so hopeless was just that there was no use in asking any questions, that nothing that could possibly be said could make any difference.

Nevertheless, I should not conclude that it is unwise to teach Greek mythology to children. What might have prevented my difficulties and what might forestall the development of any such doubts from either Greek or Old Testament stories seems to me to be the explanation, given even when not asked for, that back of all their mistakes, these people did have the right idea, namely, that they were not alone—just human beings—in the world, having to work out their problems by themselves, but that there was a God (or with Greek stories, gods) whom they could not see, but who entered into their lives in many ways. Of course much more could be said of the Hebrews than of the Greeks, but the children should be made to feel, even with the latter, that these people were much nearer right than if they had not believed in any gods at all, and that the real God, our Father, was very patient with them in their mistakes, for they were doing the best they could and he was waiting and watching for the time when he could tell them more. Of course it is very difficult to enter again into one's child mind, but it seems to me now that the idea which kept troubling was "they thought they were right and they were all wrong" and that perhaps if it had been shown that they *were* right in part, the difficulty might never have grown so acute. I suppose the mistakes in their ideas were emphasized lest their re-

ligion should be confused with our own. Whoever concludes that we had better not run the chance of any such doubt but confine ourselves to Bible stories must face the other question—may it not be just as harmful for the child to make his own the idea of God which is portrayed in some of these early stories? I can find very few who ever reacted as I did and I find that the young people who as children have been taught by the newer methods are as well established in a vital faith as any group.

The answers sent in by Church School teachers as to results of work along the newer lines with children and young people are very encouraging. One teacher who deals with the Bible very frankly in accordance with modern ideas says, "I have about seventy girls in my classes ranging from fourteen to sixteen years of age. I think I can honestly say that at the end of a year of Old Testament study the girls have at least *confidence in the Bible and a real respect for what it has to give them*. If you know the present generation of girls well, you will understand that that means a great deal." Another says that the result of using the historical method is that "The children respect and discuss Bible material as vital and real."

As every one knows, no matter what precautions have been taken, at some time in the adolescent years a great many do go through a period of questioning much that they have been taught. Such a doubting time is not inevitable, as many are able to make the transition by slow and gradual processes and become their own masters without ever having a sense of discarding their earlier religious ideas or feeling that there was nothing to hold on to. The way in which the change from dependence to independence in thought is made depends largely on the make-up of the individual, on the character of the teach-

ing he received earlier and on the wisdom of the guidance he receives at this time. But because doubt is natural it behooves us to be prepared for it, to know those with whom we deal so well that they confide in us, to give ourselves thoughtfully to meeting their needs, never to make them feel that we are shocked or surprised by the fact that they do question, and to lead them to believe that through such questioning, if they will be persistent and earnest, they will grow to be more, not less sure, for such has been the experience of many.

Is it best to plan for the class to consider the question of the grounds for faith? Will it not lead some who were untroubled before into seas of difficulty? Is it not better to wait until such questions are raised by the pupils themselves? This is the method followed by the teacher who writes: "A few months ago when the newspapers were carrying lengthy reports of Dr. Grant's reputed heresies at the Church of the Ascension, one of our boys brought into the Sunday evening high school young people's meeting a clipping a column long from one of the Saturday papers and asked me, as we stood in an informal group before the meeting began, what I thought about Dr. Grant. The boy was a high school senior with whom I had often discussed current events as well as matters of theological and philosophical import. Nothing was more natural than that when his interest was aroused in this matter, he should ask me for my opinion. It was at once apparent that the others, boys and girls, in the informal group were interested too. So we dispensed with the topic which had been planned for the young people's meeting and we spent the hour discussing item by item the alleged heresies enumerated in the article. I told them with perfect frankness what my own conclusions were. I think this instance will sufficiently illustrate my

practice. I do not drag in controversial topics. But when they arise, as they do in natural course, I deal with them with the utmost openness and frankness. I find that modern young people respect and respond to that method. And if at times I err in leading them out beyond their depth, I am less afraid of that than of injuring them by failing to meet their honest inquiries."

There is probably no one way that is best. The difficulty with this latter method is that often, because of sensitiveness or shyness, the question that is causing real trouble will not be presented for discussion. Some teachers feel that one of the surest ways of preventing much distressing doubt is to discuss, not doubts, but the positive grounds for faith, before the question as to whether there are such grounds, has become acute. As far as our use of the Bible itself is concerned, a good many favor discussing that more fully than was possible in childhood years. The problem is different of course if one has a group who have been trained in the older point of view, for they must be helped to disentangle the mistaken theories from the everlasting realities. Still with a class sixteen years of age or over, no matter how they have been brought up, it might be well to state clearly the conservative view and consider arguments for and against it, since these questions are discussed with vehemence today and since dealing with alternative points of view is one of the surest ways of clarifying thinking. Arguments against the old view of inerrancy need not be gone over here. The reasons why people came to hold such a view; the fact that the Bible itself makes no such claim; the strong evidence that the Bible presents that it is not an inerrant book, but one reflecting the growing religion of the Hebrews; the way in which true religion is thriving on the idea that the Bible is an account of the



Hebrews' search for God and God's success in reaching them; the way in which the old criticisms of the religion of the Bible have lost all their point now that we really understand the Bible—all of this is discussed interestingly in scores of books, in detail for the scholar and in "popular" form for the general reader. Some of these books should be known to every teacher of youth.

In connection with the realization that thought about the Bible has changed very greatly in the last fifty years, it might be well to show that our knowledge in every department is advancing by leaps and bounds, forcing us to revise old theories and formulate new ones. One of the scientists who attended the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1924 reported that there was hardly one of the many subjects dealt with in the papers presented at that meeting that men knew anything at all about even thirty-five years ago. Once young people come to feel a sense of triumph concerning our growing knowledge in other lines of thought, that sense of triumph will take the place of regret when they learn that our knowledge in religion too is growing. In discussing the right and best ways in which to do our thinking, much which one can simplify and use with young people can be found in the passages in James Harvey Robinson's "The Mind in the Making" which deal with our bondage to tradition. For, let me reiterate it once more, we do not pay sufficient attention in our work in religious education to right thinking. We concentrate on knowledge of facts in the Bible and the use of those facts in right conduct and we neglect the exercise and training of reason almost entirely. In support of this practice some teachers would argue that many of the finest Christian lives have been lived by simple, unlearned men and women who read and loved the Bible and were good to their

neighbors without knowing the first thing about modern thought or the trained use of their minds. One cannot answer better than by the oft-quoted saying of Huxley, "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him," and by the assertion that many of our children and young people have genuine intellectual interests which could be made to serve and enrich religion.

Whether one plans for class discussion or wishes simply to be ready to meet hard questions when they arise, each teacher or parent ought to think out for himself the best way of making plain to someone else the source and ground of the faith that is in him. It is not something to attempt casually or hastily.

Shall we tell our young people that we have come to see that both the Roman Catholic doctrine of an infallible authority in the church and the early Protestant doctrine of an infallible authority in the Bible are untenable, but that we have such an authority in the teachings of Jesus Christ? Many have tried to take refuge here from the uncertainty and "subjectivism" which they fear if each individual is to be left to select and decide for himself what he shall hold as true, but it is not a very secure stronghold. Aside from the difficulty of making sure in every case that we have the words of Jesus correctly reported, there is the prior difficulty that, if we take Jesus' way of thinking as a guide, the idea of the necessity of any infallible external authority is a mistaken one. Young people can readily see that the great desire of men and women to be sure that they are getting the truth about God and his will for us, has led them to turn to an authority outside themselves and that they have liked to believe that anything a certain Institution or Book or Person said, contained the final and unquestionable truth, once for all delivered to men. But they can also see that

Jesus did not encourage that kind of complete reliance on anything outside a man's own spirit. As Professor Micklem has pointed out in his delightful book, "The Galilean," Jesus did not go about trying to prove to men that he was the Messiah and then asking people to believe what he said because he was Messiah. "Men said about Jesus that he 'spoke with authority and not as the scribes'; they did not mean that he claimed a great name and asked them to accept his words upon the authority of his external credentials; he did not say, 'You common people cannot understand these things, but you may take it from me.' On the contrary, they meant that his simple words went right home to their own consciences as true; the voice within bore witness to the voice without, and those who believed in him did so because in their hearts they were persuaded that he spoke the truth. . . . In other words, Jesus entirely refused to employ the pressure and hypnotism either of a book or of a great name in order to impress his teaching upon anybody; he appealed to insight, to conscience and to conviction. His message was not to be carried by any outward authority; truth is its own witness within."

Jesus never spoke at all on many subjects concerning which we need guidance today. His trust in the spirit of man forbade him to settle all questions for us. He did not mean to be a new lawgiver, a regulator of life from the outside, even for the people of his own time. He was always a quickener of the best, a stimulus to conscience, a revealer of a way of life, not of set rules for life and we let him do most for us as we try to let his spirit be re-embodied in us so that "the spirit of truth" may have a chance to "guide us into all truth." That is very different from trying to take his sayings as literal rules for the conduct of life and thus forcing him to be

an external authority. We get into all kinds of fictitious as well as absurd difficulties if we do, for his sayings were not meant to have any such construction put upon them. As Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin once put it, "Jesus never said, 'Come, unto me all ye who are too lazy to think for yourselves.'"

Is there not danger that men may stray too far and get lost altogether if they do not bow even to Jesus' teachings as a final authority? Is there any justice in the charge that once men are allowed to challenge and reject some sayings in the Bible as not authentic or eternally valid, they will "not know where to stop" but go on to reject more and more till there is nothing left? Danger there undoubtedly is that, if left to use their own judgment, all men will not choose and be controlled by the best, but that difficulty is bound up with the mere fact of our being undeveloped men and women and is one which cannot be avoided by any system whatever. As a recent editorial in the *Christian Century* said, "The Orthodox church in Russia did not stop short of allying itself with the corrupt and oppressive régime of the Czar. The Roman Catholic church has not stopped short of persecution and inquisition. Protestant sects have supported the most fanatical doctrines and the most fantastic vagaries of the human mind by appeals to the unquestionable sanctions of divine authority. Of course they were wrong, we say, in their interpretation of the authority, or perhaps in their choice of it. Certainly they were, but they did not know it. The point is that having a fixed, final and infallible authority is no guarantee of knowing where to stop. The history of religion furnishes one continuous series of illustrations of that. Whatever else is doubtful, one thing is sure: there is no assurance of truth, no promise of safety and no hope of unity along that line."

It is a safer course in the long run, in religion even, as in government, to count on educating the human mind and conscience and to put the responsibility there rather than to impose a control from the outside. Both democracy and Protestantism have embarked on dangerous voyages, but perhaps they have more chance of reaching a port worth traveling to than if they were being towed by a tugboat. After all, whatever be our theory, the truth or beauty or goodness which really controls us is that which wins a response from within our own spirits. Although we have no external authority in music or art, there is nothing of which we are more sure than that Beethoven's sonatas are finer music than jazz or that Leonardo da Vinci's paintings are more beautiful than the colored supplements of the Sunday newspapers.

Though we state that we cannot take every word reported to have been uttered by Jesus as finally conclusive in our thinking, we still assert that he speaks to us with great authority. One of the firmest bulwarks of our faith in God is the realization that Jesus was sure of God. We have come to be more and more conscious of the fact that he was right in all that he said about the relations of men to men. We see now that his ethical principles, whenever they are applied, bring blessing and benefit to mankind. We trust to his principles of justice and brotherhood as the only sure guide in the problems that confront our perplexed world today. Jesus is more and more recognized as our supreme moral teacher and since his ethics cannot be separated from his religion we have good reason to trust that he is right in his religious teachings also. We cannot test religion as we can ethics, nor does it lend itself to proof quite as easily, but we would find it hard to believe that he who was so right in his thought about men could have been much mistaken in

his thought about God. So we let our thoroughly tested confidence carry over from his ethics to his religion and say, "Jesus was right in trusting a God who cared for each individual and we will rest in that trust ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

Another bulwark of our religious faith is the thought made familiar to many by John Fiske. The religious impulse is found in men of all races and ages. Plenty of mistakes there are in men's conceptions of God, but the fact that they need and search for God is none the less exceedingly significant. The man who does not feel a sense of worship, of dependence on and obligation to a higher being is abnormal. How could that come to be so deeply rooted in men except in response to that Great Being who was reaching after men and impressing himself upon them. Just as the eye is man's response of body to waves of light impinging upon sensitive cells, and the ear to waves of sound beating upon other cells, so it is reasonable to believe that religion is man's response of soul to God. If it be true that there is no objective reality that corresponds to men's thought of God, it is a fact without parallel in the world of nature. Hence the inference is strong that there is such a reality.

Still another bulwark of faith is our recognition of growth and progress in the universe. The slow development of human life from lower forms, followed by the gradual development of man in knowledge and goodness seem to indicate a purpose and a Purposer. We grow discouraged, to be sure, over the slowness of our progress and we are humiliated by our failures, but there is no doubt that we understand more of the world and God and of how we ought to live with one another than men did in the early Old Testament days, to go no further back.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. F. Scott in *The Ethical Teaching of Jesus* develops this idea convincingly.

We may not live up to our ideals any better than they did to theirs, but our standards are certainly higher and we have confidence that we can learn how to apply them so that the life of men will furnish more evidence that God is at work in the world. That is where proof and duty join hands.

If it be objected that none of this is finally and completely convincing to reason; that my religion may be only my own desire calling itself fact, only my own faith asserting itself as reality; that I still may be deceiving myself; that this is not certainty, not proof; there is only one answer that can be given. Thoughtful young people might as well face that answer. Argument alone can never make one wholly sure in religion. It can go a long way toward certainty, but in the end one must make a leap to faith, which is not contrary to reason, but goes beyond reason. One thing that religion does not offer to man is a logical certainty that God exists. Religion offers much to man but not that. It offers us a share in a great task, ideals to pursue, "incentives to the pursuit," the "companionship of a spirit akin to ours, not only asking for our loyalty, but giving it in return,"<sup>2</sup> it offers courage and comfort, it offers peace and it offers power, but it cannot be so proved by argument that no intelligent person can find an argument against it. Many people are so convinced of the essentials of their religion that they live with never a shadow of doubt crossing their minds. But they could not state the reasons for their confidence so that no one else could pick a flaw in them. This is not true of religion alone. The determined doubter can find grounds for doubting the existence of his friends, for doubting even his own identity. Often we do not remember, when troubled because we cannot prove the

<sup>2</sup>L. P. Jacks, *Religious Perplexities*.

existence of God, that we cannot prove the existence of our own mothers by entirely unassailable logic. It is important to realize that religion can no more be disproved by logic than it can be proved. You can no more prove that there is no God and no after life than you can prove that there is. If the one arguer takes a leap to his hopes, the other leaps too, but to his fears.

Young people are sometimes troubled by the feeling that there is a kind of obligation laid on them to accept that which they are not convinced is true. They may be helped toward taking a positive stand in their religious life before they have solved all their intellectual difficulties by having pointed out to them the distinction which Prof. Mary W. Calkins makes in her "First Book in Psychology" between faith and belief. She says, "Faith is always an active personal attitude toward another self; belief is always an active personal attitude toward things, events or truths. . . . *The duty to have faith is always therefore, the obligation to identify oneself with the persons or causes which seem the highest*, and the exhortation to faith is always, on the lips of the great teachers, an incentive to loyalty. Thus the New Testament commands to believe emphasize, always, the need or the duty of an affirming, consenting, personal attitude toward a divine self and do not require that one hold an opinion about him."<sup>3</sup> *So the obligation to have faith may be met while one is still investigating truths about which one is uncertain*, in full recognition that one cannot drive one's mind into belief in them, for "the only intellectual obligation is unswerving honesty in investigation." To be sure, such a personal identification could not be made where a positive and complete denial of the reality of God or of Jesus existed, but if there is only uncertainty regarding this or

<sup>3</sup> Pp. 249, 250.



that "thing, event or truth," the personal commitment of loyalty to the divine self that represents the highest ideals one knows may still be made. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

Is not such a commitment before one is wholly sure, something of a venture? Yes, but religion can be known in its fullness only to those who are ready to dare something for its sake, who are willing to make just such a venture as they must make in human friendship or love. Donald Hankey's picturesque definition of religion is well known; "Religion is betting your life that there is a God." Harry Emerson Fosdick says, "Faith is holding reasonable convictions in realms beyond the reach of final demonstration and, as well, it is thrusting out one's life upon those convictions as though they were surely true. *Faith is vision plus valor.*"

The fact that you can only tell by trying and that faith involving adventure is an essential part of the religious experience, is true of many situations in life. It is true of such a simple thing as learning to swim. There is no way to find out whether you can swim alone except by acting as if you could, by trusting the water to hold you up. To sit on the bank and wonder will never tell you. It is true also of many of the richest relationships and most serious undertakings of life. Dr. Fosdick has brought this out clearly in the opening chapter of his fine book on "The Meaning of Faith." One cannot be perfectly sure that someone else would become a trusted friend without trusting him and so finding out. Every marriage is something of a risk. One cannot be sure (except with the confidence which intuition gives) that another will turn out to be a loyal helpmeet and companion through life except by living with that other "for better, for worse." Love and care are given to every child with-

out proof in advance that he will be worthy of that love and care. "Every boy choosing a calling takes his chances. . . . In every enterprise we must use not only legs to stand on, but tentacles as well with which to feel our way forward—intuitions, insights, hopes, unverified convictions, faith. We project our life forward as we build a cantilever bridge. Part of the structure is solidly bolted and thoroughly articulated in a system—but ever beyond this established portion we audaciously thrust out new beginnings in eager expectation that from the other side something will come to meet them. Without this no progress would ever be possible." A fine saying of Pascal's is worth quoting in this connection; "If we ought to do nothing save on a certainty, we ought to do nothing for religion for this is not certain. But how much we do on an uncertainty, as sea-voyages, battles! I say then, if this be the case, we ought to do nothing at all, for nothing is certain, and that there is more certainty in religion than that we shall see another day, for it is not certain that we shall see tomorrow, but it is certainly possible that we shall not see it. But when we work for tomorrow, therefore for the uncertain, we act reasonably."

For most young people this is no counsel of despair. The element of daring in it, the idea of living up to the trust God has shown in men by counting on them to find him and work with him without seeing him and without being able to "prove" him as a theorem in geometry can be proved, this can be made to appeal to the venturesomeness and the eagerness of youth. A recent writer in the *Christian Century* sees this clearly; "The word which won David Livingstone for Africa was that fine offer of Moffat: 'I will take you where you will see the smoke of a thousand villages in none of which is the gospel of Christ known.' That is the strong appeal to win the

practical service of youth, which does not long for safety first, or for a certainty in life, but rather for adventure and the dangerous life. But it is not fully realized that *the same appeal wins the intellect*, which seeks not merely to repeat the past but to explore, and there must be something offered by the church of Christ to satisfy this longing. There is a fine picture by Millais of the boy Raleigh looking over the sea with wonder in his eyes. All his voyages are ahead, there within those eyes. The Christian church must provide an equivalent for that longing to press onward into the unknown world. The instinct of the adventurer cannot be stifled without serious disturbance of the human personality, and any call to the Christian life which does not offer a satisfaction to that instinct will be incomplete and so far ineffective. We need the moral equivalent for the lure of the far horizons." Bishop Lawrence well says in his "Fifty Years," "I believe that the American youth, inheriting religious faith, mental powers and alert bodies, are best won when faith is made an adventure, and when that adventure leads on through questions, struggles, sacrifice, toward the truth." If youth can only be made to understand, the spirit of modern, liberal Christianity is very much akin to its own. The problem for us is how best to help them to understand, and to realize that the cause of Christ welcomes and needs those who have the kind of courage and trust which breathes through Walt Whitman's words,

Sail forth! steer for the deep waters only!  
Reckless, O soul, exploring, I with thee and thou with me;  
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!  
O farther, farther sail!  
O daring joy, but safe! Are they not all the seas of God?  
O farther, farther, farther sail!

## APPENDIX I

### BOOKS THAT HELP

A FEW books are here suggested which present to the non-specialist some of the main conclusions or theories of the Biblical scholars in an untechnical fashion. Fuller bibliographies may be found in many of the books mentioned.

#### I. Currents of Thought in Religion Today.

The most distinctive element of modern religious thinking, namely the idea of growth as natural and necessary, is interestingly discussed by Harry E. Fosdick in *Christianity and Progress* (Revell, 1922). Lectures on modern theology and the significance for religion of recent developments in science and psychology are given by such wellknown men as Chas. R. Brown, Albert P. Fitch, Willard Sperry and Robert Speer, under the title *Christianity and Modern Thought* (Yale University Press, 1924). More thorough discussion of evolution and modern theology may be found in Carl S. Patton's recent book, *Religion in the Thought of Today* (Macmillan, 1924). This includes two chapters on the application of the historical method to the Old and to the New Testament. Those particularly interested in evolution will find a fuller treatment of that subject and its religious bearings in J. M. and M. C. Coulter's book, *Where Evolution and Religion Meet* (Macmillan, 1924), and a brief one in pamphlets by H. E. Fosdick and S. Eddy, *Science and Religion* and *Evolution and the Bible* (Doran, 1924). Discussion of loyalty to church and creeds combined with loyalty to truth and growth are

to be found in Bishop Lawrence's very significant little book, *Fifty Years* (Houghton Mifflin, 1923), in Leighton Parks' *What is Modernism?* (Scribner, 1924), and in *Credo and Loyalty* by seven professors of the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge (Macmillan, 1924).

Those interested in connecting present-day thinking with "Bible times" will find an excellent brief survey of religious thought in D. C. Somervell's *A Short History of our Religion from Moses to the Present Day* (Macmillan, 1924).

Interdenominational periodicals which keep one abreast of the times in religious thought are the *Christian Century* and *Christian Work* (both weeklies) and the *Journal of Religion* (bimonthly).

## 2. General Introductory Guides to Bible Study.

For a discussion of the modern point of view in regard to the Bible, the best book is one by Harry E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (Macmillan, 1924). Miracles and the divinity of Christ are considered as well as the older and newer views of the Bible. Older books which deal with the bearing of Biblical criticism on faith are W. C. Selleck's *The New Appreciation of the Bible* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1906), and Wm. N. Clarke's *Sixty Years with the Bible* (Scribner, 1909). A clear little book for beginners is Frank Sheldon's *The Bible in our Modern World* (Pilgrim Press, 1917). The same author has a good brief discussion in a pamphlet issued by the Pilgrim Press, *The Distortion of the Bible*.

Problems of revelation, inspiration and authority are dealt with in conjunction with discussions of the history of the Bible and an excellent introduction to the books of the Old and New Testament in a very valuable book by John R. van Pelt, *An Introduction to the Study of the Bible* (Doran, 1923). Less comprehensive is Arthur S. Peake's *The Bible: its Origin, Significance and Abiding Worth* (Hodder, 5th edition, 1914). Still briefer is Herbert Willett's *Our Bible*;

*its Origin, Character and Value* (Christian Century Press, 1917).

An excellent single volume *Commentary on the Bible* by many scholars of note is edited by Arthur S. Peake (Nelson and Sons, 1919). Briefer treatments of all the books in the Bible are given in *The Bible as Literature* by Wood and Grant (Abingdon, 1914), and in *A Guide Book to the Bible* by G. F. Genung (Ginn & Co., 1919). Books definitely planned for beginners or young people are Harold Hunting's *The Story of our Bible* (Scribner, 1915) and George Hodges' *How to Know the Bible* (Bobbs Merrill, 1918).

Good reference books on the Bible and religion are James Hastings' *The Dictionary of the Bible* in five volumes or one volume (Scribner), and the *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*, edited by Shailer Mathews and Birney Smith (Macmillan). Some of the best series of commentaries on separate books of the Bible are *The New Century Bible* (Oxford Univ. Press), *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Macmillan) and *The Bible for Home and School* (Macmillan).

### 3. The Old Testament.

(See also books cited under No. 2.)

The standard Old Testament Introductions (thorough by S. R. Driver, C. H. Cornill and H. Creelman, briefer by J. E. McFadyen, G. B. Gray and G. F. Moore) are always useful for the literary history of any Old Testament book. More delightful to read and thoroughly scholarly is Julius Beyer's *Literature of the Old Testament* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1922. Less expensive edition, 1924). This book has an excellent bibliography. Briefer, but skillfully done is H. Thatcher Fowler's *History of the Literature of Ancient Israel*. (Macmillan, 1912.)

Discussions of history, literature and religion together with selections from the Biblical material may be found in C. F.

Kent's Historical Bible Series, of which four volumes (*Heroes and Crises*, *Founders and Rulers*, *Kings and Prophets*, *Leaders and Teachers*) cover the Old Testament (Scribner, 1908-1911). A good single volume which includes valuable charts is I. G. Mathews' *Old Testament Life and Literature* (Macmillan, 1923), while fuller treatments are in G. W. Wade's and H. P. Smith's *Old Testament Histories*.

Planned for young people but valuable for the general reader and especially for the teacher who wishes to know how to present the Old Testament material correctly and interestingly are the books of the Great Leaders Series, *The Heroes of Early Israel* (through Samuel) by Irving F. Wood, *The Heroes of Israel's Golden Age* (through Isaiah) by George Dahl, and *Great Leaders of Hebrew History* (through John the Baptist) by Henry T. Fowler. (All published by Macmillan, 1920-1923.) Similar to the above but in one volume with many maps and illustrations is C. F. Kent's and A. E. Bailey's *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth* (Scribner, 1920).

There are several very valuable books for the teacher or parent who wishes a discussion of the particularly puzzling parts of the Old Testament. One of the best is W. G. Jordan's *Ancient Hebrew Stories and their Modern Interpretation* (Doran, 1923). While this gives a great deal of up-to-date information in a clear and readable form, it emphasizes permanent religious worth. The same thing is done in a less thorough manner by John E. McFadyen in *The Use of the Old Testament in the Light of Modern Knowledge* (Pilgrim Press, 1923). More detailed is J. R. Cohu's *The Bible and Modern Thought* (Dutton, 1920).

#### 4. The New Testament.

(See also books cited under No. 2 and No. 7.)

The standard introduction is by James Moffat (Scribner, 1911), while briefer ones were written by A. S. Peake and Benjamin Bacon. There is a readable one by E. J. Goodspeed,

*The Story of the New Testament* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1916). Special New Testament problems are discussed by Maurice Jones in *The New Testament in the Twentieth Century* (Macmillan, 1914), while an excellent small volume for one who wishes to understand the modern point of view in New Testament study is *The New Testament Today* by Ernest F. Scott (Macmillan, 1921).

A perfect mine of information on the background, sources, history, criticism, archaeology and study of the separate books will be found in one volume in George W. Wade's *New Testament History* (E. P. Dutton, 1922).

There are two good recent studies of the life of Christ for the general reader, Edward I. Bosworth's *Life and Teachings of Jesus* (Macmillan, 1924), and George A. Barton's *Jesus of Nazareth* (Macmillan, 1923). The latter is planned for young people, but is very useful for the teacher also. Older books are C. F. Kent's *Life and Teachings of Jesus* (Scribner, 1913), and G. H. Gilbert's *Jesus* (Macmillan, 1912). A. Menzies' *The Earliest Gospel* is an excellent commentary on Mark and gives a great deal of information on the life of Jesus.

On the teachings of Jesus the best book is the most recent, Ernest F. Scott's *The Ethical Teachings of Jesus* (Macmillan, 1924). Wm. N. Clarke's *The Ideal of Jesus* (Scribner, 1916) is good also.

On the Gospel of John, Ernest F. Scott again gives us the best book, *The Fourth Gospel* (Scribner, 1907). R. H. Strahan's *The Fourth Gospel* (Student Christian Movement, London, 1917) is very good also. The latter is a commentary, the former a discussion of the purpose and theology of the gospel.

For more thorough study of New Testament Miracles than is afforded by the lives of Christ, E. R. Micklen's *Miracles and the New Psychology* (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1922) and J. M. Thompson's *Miracles in the New Testament* (Arnold, 1912) may be found useful. On the Infancy stories, there is Soltau's *The Birth of Jesus Christ* (1903),



Lobstein *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (Putnam, 1903) and (perhaps best for the general reader) Frederick Palmer's little book, *The Virgin Birth* (Macmillan, 1924). On the Resurrection there are two books which deal with the subject very thoroughly, Kirsopp Lake's *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Putnam, 1907) and C. R. Bowen, *The Resurrection in the New Testament* (Putnam, 1911). An excellent book on the miracles, the virgin birth and the resurrection as well as on other special topics is one which is unfortunately out of print, James Warschauer's *Jesus: Seven Questions* (J. Clarke & Co., 1908).

Two very good books on Paul for teachers are McNiele's *St. Paul; his Life, Letters and Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, Univ. Press, 1920) and B. W. Robinson's *Life of St. Paul* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1918). The latter is arranged for study classes. There are also well-known studies of Paul by Deissman, Weinel, Wrede, B. W. Bacon, E. D. Wood and, more recently, books by C. H. Dodd, F. G. Peabody and Charles Jefferson which emphasize the character and teachings of Paul more than the events of his life. C. F. Kent's *Work and Teachings of the Apostles* (Scribner, 1916) covers all the New Testament except the gospels. Other books which give the background for the apostolic age are S. J. Case's *Evolution of Early Christianity* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1914), E. F. Scott's *The Beginnings of the Church* (Scribner, 1914), and S. Angus, *The Environment of Early Christianity* (Scribner, 1915).

### 5. The Religious Development of the Child.

Since religion cannot be separated from life, it is necessary to understand the child in order to know how to aid his religious development. Of the many books on child psychology, two may be mentioned, N. Norsworthy and M. Witley's *The Psychology of Childhood* (Macmillan, 1918), and the older but still good book by A. E. Kirkpatrick, *The Individual in the Making* (Houghton Mifflin, 1911). The first

half of Luther Weigle's *The Pupil and Teacher* (Doran) is good for parent as well as teacher. Pleasingly written and full of sound common sense are Mrs. Cabot's *Seven Ages of Childhood* (Houghton Mifflin, 1921), E. P. St. John's *Child Nature and Child Nurture* (Pilgrim Press), Angelo Patri's *Child Training* (Appleton & Co., 1922), Frances Danielson's *Child Types and the Changing Child* (Pilgrim Press, 1923).

Of special aid to the mother or teacher of young children are *Parenthood and Child Nurture* by Edna D. Baker (Macmillan), Anna Betts' *The Mother Teacher of Religion* (Abingdon Press, 1922) and Edith R. Mumford's books, *The Dawn of Character*, *The Dawn of Religion in the Mind of a Child* and *How Can we Help Children to Pray?* (all published by Longmans Green and Co.). Mary Rankin's *A Course for Beginners in Religious Education* (Scribners, 1917) contains many helpful suggestions for parent or teacher. Hugh Hartshorne's *Childhood and Character* (Pilgrim Press) has much of value, and Puffer's *The Boy and his Gang* (Houghton Mifflin, 1912) is very enlightening. For those who are trying to guide adolescent girls there are Mary Moxcey's *Girlhood and Character* (Abingdon Press) and the little book by Margaret Slattery, *The Girl in her Teens* (Sunday-School Times Co., 1910).

On religious education, a recent book meant especially for teachers, is by George Betts, *How to Teach Religion* (Abingdon Press, 1923) and an older one, George A. Coe's *Education in Religion and Morals* (Revell, 1911). On the use of the Bible in religious education we have Hetty Lee's *Present-Day Problems in Religious Teaching* (Macmillan, London, 1921) and J. Morgan Jones' *The New Testament in Modern Education* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1922). A book by A. J. W. Myers on *The Old Testament in the Sunday School* (Teacher's College Press, 1912) attempts to select the Old Testament material of value for different ages. The same author is soon to publish a similar book on the New Testament.

Of the books on religious education in the family, Luther

Weigle's *Training of Children in the Christian Family* (Pilgrim Press, 1922) and Henry F. Cope's *Religious Education in the Family* (Univ. of Chicago Press) are recent valuable studies.

A selected bibliography on Religious Education is furnished free by the Religious Education Association, 308 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago.

#### 6. Bible Story Books for Children.

There are hosts of commonplace books of Bible stories for children, but very few good ones. For the youngest children the books by Anna Betts and Mary Rankin mentioned under No. 5 give some Bible stories and many other good ones. Another by Frances W. Danielson which promises to be excellent is to be issued in the fall of 1924 by the Pilgrim Press under the title *The Bible Story Book*. Mary Stewart has several volumes which are good for children between the ages of six and ten. Her *Tell me a True Story* and *The Shepherd of Us All* are printed by Revell.

Decidedly to be recommended for children from eight to fourteen is Rufus Jones' *The Boy Jesus and his Companions* (Macmillan, 1922). This and his *St. Paul the Hero* (Macmillan, 1917) are both unusually successful in emphasizing religious values which children are capable of appreciating. There is no attempt at explanation of miracles but they are used to drive home a correct impression rather than to create a false one. These books have real literary charm. George Hodges has three books for children, early Old Testament stories in *The Garden of Eden*, later Old Testament stories in *The Castle of Zion* and the life of Christ in *When the King Came* (Houghton, Mifflin, 1904-1912). There is less use of the imagination than in Rufus Jones' books and there is occasional attempt at explanation of stories from the modern point of view. They contain a very free rendering of the Biblical material which, in the opinion of many, makes the stories more intelligible and interesting to children. Those who prefer a

less colloquial rendering but who think there must be some re-expression for the best results with children, will like *The Children's Bible* by H. A. Sherman and C. F. Kent (Scribner, 1922). Here there is no discussion or explanation, merely a selection of the parts which appeal most to children and a re-translation. The whole is put into attractive storybook form with good print and illustrations. Hurlburt's and Foster's *Story of the Bible* are older books which follow the same plan but not nearly as successfully. Those who want the children to be brought up on the King James English will like *The Bible for Young People* (Century Co.), or *Bible Stories to Read and Tell*, selected and arranged by Frances J. Olcott (Houghton Mifflin Co.). These contain no comments. The much anticipated Van Loon's *Story of the Bible* makes no attempt to utilize the work of historical students, is poorly proportioned and does not preserve the dignity of the Biblical English. As may be judged from the quotations, T. Rhondda Williams *Old Testament Stories in Modern Light*, is one of the few books which does attempt to give children a correct understanding of the Bible stories. It is unfortunate that it is nearly out of print. (1911, Presbyterian Board of Publication.) Two unusual books for children are Alfred Bailey's *On Nazareth Hill* (Pilgrim Press, 1915), a delightful study of the boy Jesus, and Abraham M. Rihbany's *The Christ Story for Boys and Girls* (Houghton, Mifflin, 1916). The latter is a children's edition of *The Syrian Christ*, valuable because of the author's acquaintance with Syrian customs and habits of thought.

Some books which make no attempt to give children a correct view of the Bible from the standpoint of modern criticism, are to be recommended for their literary merit and their attractive form. Notable among these is James Baikie's *The Bible Story* (Macmillan, 1923), beautifully written and illustrated. *The Book of Life* is prepared by Norman M. Hall and Irving F. Wood. The eight handsome volumes cover the whole Bible and include a volume called *The Bible Educator* which discusses questions of interest to teachers and

parents. The first volume is for the youngest, the rest for the older children. To many the cost would be prohibitive. (John Rudin and Co., 2312 Prairie Ave., Chicago). The Abingdon Press (150 Fifth Ave., N. Y.) issues several series of attractive Bible stories for children of different ages. *Tales of Far-Off Days* and *Tales of Captains and Conquests* by Norman Hall (Ginn and Co.) have, beside the Old Testament stories, many fine photographs and illustrative material from English and American literature.

#### 7. Books on the Bible and Religion for the Adolescent Age.

The best Old Testament books for this age are *The Great Leaders Series* and *The Hebrew Commonwealth* mentioned under No. 3, and for the New Testament, *Jesus of Nazareth* by G. A. Barton, mentioned under No. 4. On the Life of Christ there is also a good book by Frank Paradise, *Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Youth*, which does not offer as many explanations nor give as much background as does Professor Barton's book. To some boys it might seem a little sentimental, but it is not really so. Wm. B. Forbush's *Life of Christ for Young People* (Scribner, 1917) has some good points for those from twelve to sixteen years of age. Nothing in it will stand in the way of fuller knowledge, though there is little discussion of most points.

Three books which have done a great deal to make Jesus a reality to many, both old and young, are Harry E. Fosdick's *The Manhood of the Master* (Y.W.C.A. Press, 600 Lexington Ave., N. Y., 1913), T. R. Glover's *The Jesus of History* (Association Press, 1917), and an anonymous book, *By an Unknown Disciple* (Doran, 1922). Dr. Fosdick's book is a series of studies of the personality of the Master arranged for daily use with very stimulating suggestions on the selected Bible readings. Glover's book gives some information about sources and background, but the book is chiefly a study of Jesus' way of life. It is very successful in achieving what

its author hoped, "that it will deepen our interest in him and our love of him." The anonymous book is an imaginative sketch introducing an unknown disciple, but it holds closely to the facts as given in the gospels and makes the chief character live.

A book which will prove useful for the class study of older pupils is Ernest Burton's *Jesus of Nazareth; How he Lived, Thought, Worked and Achieved* (American Inst. of Sacred Literature, Chicago). President Burton is one of our best New Testament scholars and this little paper covered book gives in very simple form the fruits of some of his labors.

On the Acts and Epistles we have an excellent book for reading or for class study (ages 12-16) in Helen Nicolay's *Peter and Paul and their Friends* (Beacon Press, 1922). This gives evidence of more knowledge of recent literature on the subject than do most Sunday-school books. There are two story lives of Paul in which imagination plays some part and in which the work of scholars is utilized, though not forced on the attention. One is Basil Mathews' *Paul the Dauntless* (Revell, 1916), illustrated with pictures and photographs; the other is L. Henry's *Paul, Son of Kish*. There is also a charming book by Anne Allinson which gives in story form the atmosphere of early Christian days, *Children of the Way* (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1923).

A few books may be suggested which will help young people in the effort to gain a religion of their own and which would also be useful to the teacher who is trying to aid in that process. Harry E. Fosdick's *Meaning of Prayer, Meaning of Faith and Meaning of Service* (Association Press, 1915-1920) are arranged for daily study and are most rewarding for the later adolescent age. Other unusually good books on the essentials of religion are A. Herbert Gray's *The Christian Adventure* (Student Christian Movement, London, 1920) and Edward I. Bosworth's *What it Means to be a Christian* (Pilgrim Press, 1922). Not meant for young people especially, but written simply are Henry S. Coffin's *Some Christian Convictions* (Yale Univ. Press, 1915), and

*What is There in Religion* (Macmillan), Wm. P. Merrill's *Footings for Faith* (Scribner, 1915), Chas. R. Brown's *Why I Believe in Religion* (Macmillan, 1924), and Henry Churchill King's *Seeing Life Whole* (Macmillan, 1924). Two unusually good books arranged for class-room discussion of Christian essentials for the middle adolescent period are Winifred Graham's *The Highway of God* (Church of England S. S. Institute, London) and Frank Sheldon's *Making Christianity Christian* (Pilgrim Press, 1923). The former emphasizes character values and right ways of thinking; the latter deals with questions concerning the Bible and authority in religion.

## APPENDIX II

### JESUS' TEACHINGS CONCERNING THE END OF THE WORLD

For a long time probably the majority of Christians have held that Jesus himself believed that his aims for men were to be worked out gradually and quietly on this earth, that his highest hopes were that men might enter into full communion with God, and be obedient to his will. We have supposed that the sense in which Jesus thought of himself as Messiah was that he came in order to reveal the higher way of life to men and deliver them from sin. But he had to use the apocalyptic language of his time, though it did not adequately express his ideas. Unfortunately his disciples took what he said literally, and read into it all of their own expectations of an external kingdom, to come suddenly, by the power of God. These were the ideas commonly held at the time. Therefore Jesus' followers thought of him as they had long been accustomed to think of the Messiah, coming as a triumphant king and judge in the clouds of heaven, to make Israel supreme. The early church cherished this dream till, because of Jesus' failure so to appear with the lapse of time, men gradually outgrew it and felt compelled to give it up. We now understand what Jesus really meant. For convenience sake, let us call those who hold this theory group one.

Recently, through study of Jewish apocalyptic literature, many scholars have come to believe that Jesus (to a greater or less extent) shared the ideas of his time as to the kingdom and the Messiah, that he used the apocalyptic language because it expressed some elements of his own thought. The more extreme group hold that these conceptions of the imminent coming of a visible kingdom with himself regnant in



power, dominated his whole thinking. There are many different opinions as to details, but in general this is the view held by those whom we may designate as group two. Not all modern scholars are in this group, it must be understood. The subject is still much debated and is perhaps the most live problem of New Testament historical study today. Material in the gospels points in both directions and there are various possibilities in the interpretation of that material.

There is, of course, a third group. There has always been in the church a certain number who took the words of Jesus as to the end of the world literally, but these men are not at all in sympathy with the scholars in group two, for group three think that Jesus was right in his predictions and still look forward to their realization, whereas those in group two consider that he was in part mistaken, as were all men of his time. Group three has been much reinforced in number in the last decade by the war, which is regarded by them as the beginning of the end.

What is the teacher to do? Let us frankly recognize that there are difficulties whatever view one holds. Group three confronts the difficulty (if Jesus' words are taken literally) that he said all this would happen very soon. (Mt. 10:23 and 16:28.) The fact that it has not yet happened admits of no explanation, from this point of view, which is not a forced and unnatural explanation. It could not be called a scholarly point of view; no modern scholar of any eminence holds it. Many Christians feel it to be dangerous to the cause of Christ in the world, since it encourages a "watchful waiting" policy and discourages men from undertaking an earnest battle to bring life, with God's help, into accordance with his will.

The first group will find their opinion re-enforced by the recognition of scholars that a large part of Mark 13 (and corresponding sections in Matthew and Luke) was probably never spoken by Jesus, but is a separate writing, "The little Apocalypse," which was incorporated here. They are encouraged also by the suggestion that in Mark 13 a great deal of

what Jesus may himself have said, was said in reference to the time when the temple should be destroyed (which did happen in 70 A. D.), and not at all in reference to the end of the world. (Note Mk. 13; 2-4ff.) In Mt. 24:2-3ff. a slight change in the wording alters the meaning so that what is said does apply to the end of the world, a subject on which men of that time were eager to have pronouncements. Since we can see that this has been done here, perhaps elsewhere the same thing has taken place (though it is not so evident to us) so that this puzzling material may all go back to other minds rather than to Jesus' own. The surest words of Jesus' own, so some scholars say, are, "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one . . . but the Father" (Mk. 13; 32). All this makes teaching from this point of view easier, and of course the whole idea of the spiritual and gradual coming of the kingdom fits in naturally with present day thinking. The only difficulty one is likely to encounter is with keen pupils who may puzzle over some passages in reading the gospel material which do not lend themselves as readily to this point of view and cannot easily be explained as not Jesus' own. President E. D. Burton, in his little book "Jesus of Nazareth," offers plausible explanations for some of the most difficult of these.

But it is not all smooth sailing. If it were, there would be fewer swinging over, as many are, to group two. But the stand taken by group two offers other difficulties of its own for the teacher. What effect does it have on the Christian's religion to hold that Jesus was, in part at least, mistaken in what he said about the end of the world? Does that mean that we today have no use for large sections of the gospel? And how does such a view affect our conception of Jesus himself? It is not possible to discuss these questions fully here, but only to make a few suggestions.

First, as to the worth there may still be for us in Jesus' teachings about the last things. Even though we do not believe there is to be any great general cataclysm in the near future, nor that we shall see Jesus returning in power

from the clouds, several essential elements in that teaching are still valid and as important as they ever were: (1) Underlying the whole apocalyptic point of view is *faith*, faith that persists in spite of disaster and failure, that God is in control of the world and that right shall ultimately conquer. We need that today as much as men ever did, and can feel ourselves supported in our effort to attain that faith by these gospel teachings, even though the form in which the first century faith is expressed, is strange to us. (2) Through all Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom, the keynote is character, not outer circumstances nor any benefits of an external sort. The quality of life that shall characterize the citizens of the Kingdom is what really concerns him. The spiritual interests are steadily uppermost. This is in sharp contrast to the prevailing ideas of the Kingdom, and, though it be expressed in the thought forms of that day, it is just as applicable to our own problems as if it had been expressed in some other way. What Jesus really cared about when he talked of the kingdom is what we care for when we are at our best. It is of the stuff that endures.

(3) Even if we do not believe that the world will come to an end in a cataclysmic fashion in the near future for all of us together, we must realize that it is bound to come to an end for each of us individually and that the conditions of life may be completely changed for each of us at any time and perhaps suddenly. We can take to heart all the reminders that it may be at "an hour that ye think not" and all the warnings to be prepared, to live with foresight rather than in heedless forgetfulness of our responsibilities. We do not need to lose that deeper meaning because we drop the idea of a great catastrophe for all mankind at once. It is of great importance that young people and children too, learn to recognize the essential elements of truth while discarding some of its wrappings, to see that an idea need not be rejected *in toto* because it is in part fantastic or mistaken. Such training can be secured by a study of the apocalyptic material.

How would the recognition that Jesus was in part mis-

taken affect our thought of him? Some feel that it would be quite disastrous, but others perceive that it need not prove disturbing after all. That he had some human limitations we are sure; he was limited by the need for food and sleep; one could conceive of an angelic visitor who could work on without sleep for a lifetime. How much nearer Jesus is to us and how much more effective his work just because he was subject to these limitations of a real human being! Many go farther and say that limits to his knowledge formed a necessary part of his service to men. Dr. Barton says, "If, as we believe, he was God incarnate, he was incarnate as a man of the first century. He possessed a first century man's point of view; he would share in some degree a first century man's thoughts."<sup>1</sup> (If "in some degree" be emphasized, perhaps all would agree.) A spiritual insight, a consciousness of God, a perfection of character, he did indeed possess that marked him off from all men of the first or any other century, but he could not have shared these things with men as he did if his way of thinking had been totally different. So at least it seems to many, and there is nothing derogatory to him in the assumption. Certainly in passing over the thought of Jesus coming again from the clouds in glory as a conception of local and transient worth only and in substituting for it other ways of expressing his triumph over death and his power over men, we are not doing something un-Biblical. For the author of the Fourth Gospel did precisely that and thereby made devotion to Christ possible to many to whom the Jewish expectations did not appeal. (None of this apocalyptic material is found in the Gospel of John.) Jesus can be to us the "chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely" even if we treat the apocalyptic representation only as symbol and poetry, or if we drop it entirely.

So there are various possibilities in interpreting these sayings and whichever one is chosen can be used in constructive teaching.

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 124.